

Green Street Mortuary Band



The San Francisco Funeral Marching Band

The drummings of the dead rattle the fierce concrete slabs of San Francisco to such spiritual pitches so as to echo the un " DRUMMINGS OF THE DEAD " derglow of the hidden souls pushing upward and outward against the rolling black tired streets. The trumpeter raises the sounds higher as the Funeral Marching Band comes calling. This dreaming entourage of black moving shiny metal cloaking a body caged with beautiful sounds plods their way between peoples fantasies of life and death around the corners of reality. An old silver woman peers out of her two-story building viewing cautiously the transport of the dead with a broken tear forming for her own inevitable. A frustrated muni-bus turns right as a spotted nervous dog barks at the overcrowded sidewalk full of staring, glaring, peering eyes as gawkers of all kinds wiggle into position for an even better view of the distant soul passing. The crowd knows only that what they are eating visually

will come back to haunt or bless their own steps into the unknown before they make the same eternal ride. The silent sounds of the dead move from within a peculiar feeling hearse and along the corridors of the mind as it rebels taking the majestic sounds of the Funeral Marching Band higher still. A small cranky child cries as his strawberry ice cream cone drops almost deliberately in the path of the dead as the wheels of the transport blend black into red swirls of giggling color. A flash of skewered light glints off the working sweating hearse as it blindly feels its way through to the back of peoples fears and hopes. To see the Funeral Marching Band is to strum one's soul by watching a former life swan dive into all the colors of darkness. The sweet sounds of the music makers are atop the height of the dead wagon again as they trod the pristine powdered corpse one last time through this temporary world. As the grinning black hearse goes by there is the knocking of metal against wood making dumb sounds. The featureless coffin within tries to grapple with

its moving cargo container by making weird shiftings and thuds only heard by babies that are a breath old. Come see the delightful trance called Funeral Marching Band which is what happens when you first see the pace your way. The troupe surrounds the streets with hymns for the dead to finally be at rest. As the band retires home so too does the old woman as she closes her curtains for the last time while a whisper of dusk approaches and all that is left are the varied hues of the night and the Funeral Marching band in waiting.....

J.M.



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All photos by Rebecca Pipes



Lisa Pollard is the only woman to have played as a regular member of the Duke Ellington orchestra's sax section. She performed in concert, at festivals and on dance gigs in the 1972-73 band. Ellington died in 1974 - and somewhat later she played on tour and in clubs with the recently deceased Mercer Ellington's "Ellington Orchestra." As a teenager Pollard played in school bands and clerked for her Uncle Gene Benyas, who ran Stairway to Music in Oakland, a modern-jazz record store in the East Bay. Pollard soon was studying music at Laney College under Elvo D'Amante, and played in Laney's new music faculty member Ed Kelly's jazz workshop band. She was introduced to Ellington's baritone saxophonist, Harry Carney, at a 1971 Zellerbach Hall concert, ending up playing with the Duke's band and smaller Ellington combos. She was particularly influenced by Ellington saxists Paul Gonsalves, Russell Procope and (later on, in Europe) Ben Webster. Pollard graduated Sonoma State in performing arts, played with the New Deal Rhythm Band, Zydeco Express, Jessica Williams' Sextet, various Candlestick Park bands, and has played in Finocchio's band for years. She is also currently playing with the Green Street Brass Band, the principal Chinatown funeral marching band.