

## Society Bandleader Builds Business and a Reputation

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The only kind of music that Bob Hardwick isn't crazy about is country and western. Being from Louisville, Ken., that might have put him out of step. Happily, that's one thing this top-drawer society dance band leader has never been.

Out of the ordinary, yes; out of step, never. For 13 years, Mr. Hardwick performed exceptionally as a banker, and as an orchestra leader. By day he called on correspondent banking clients for Citibank and then for U.S. Trust. By night he suited up to entertain the rich and famous, and, sometimes, his clients.

Weren't they mighty surprised to look up and see the attractive fellow who had earlier been in their offices pitching a financial transaction now pounding out ballads and pop tunes on the piano?

If it is true that the right side of the brain governs math and musical ability, it is a wonder that Mr. Hardwick doesn't list to starboard as he walks down the street.

Over tea, Mr. Hardwick reminisced about his two-pronged career. Why, after all, having been born with perfect pitch (a capability he ably demonstrated on a nearby piano) would he have wanted to major in English, and minor in business? Especially since he had been the recipient of numerous early-age musical awards and kudos?

Of course, because his father was a banker, and we can assume that both father and son viewed a career in music as somewhat risky, and possibly, in Louisville, just "not done."

Mr. Hardwick graduated from Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. He then chose to pursue music by studying at the University of North Texas, which boasted a top jazz and rock curriculum.

He had earlier sent in a tape of his piano music to *Downbeat* magazine and been surprised by a subsequent scholarship offer to study at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. However, that institution was focused on more contemporary fare than that favored by Mr. Hardwick, so off to North Texas he went.

He also studied composition at Juillard under the well-known jazz arranger and classical composer Hall Overton.

He has always preferred the music he heard at debutante balls and weddings while growing up in Louisville — the music of the 1930, 1940s and 1950s. Music you can dance to, and that evokes the

glamour of those times.

After all this musical training, Mr. Hardwick came to New York and, oddly, entered Citibank's training program, like so many youngsters of the day. He never expected to stay very long. He intended to get a financial leg up from a few years in banking, and then to pursue his music career.

During this time he started to compose, often in partnership with Bob Crewe, who went on to write a number of big hits such as "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You" and "Rag Doll." Jointly, they created a number of pop songs recorded on the Elektra label.

Mr. Hardwick continues to enjoy writing music, and has in fact scored two television shows, "The Home Front" on PBS and "Hunters in the Sky" on the Discovery Channel.

However, it was in 1976, after several years in banking, that Mr. Hardwick's second career was born. A friend's

### *Combining money and music makes for a unique New York life.*

daughter was planning a coming-out party, and Mr. Hardwick agreed to play.

Gradually, as his reputation spread, The Hardwick Sound became the orchestra of choice for any number of debutante cotillions, weddings, and charity events. Mr. Hardwick has played at several presidential inaugurations, some of the most publicized weddings of our times, such as the Giuliani/Nathan wedding, and many dazzling social events.

Ultimately, the organizational challenge, and a matter of endurance, convinced him to retire from banking in 1990 and to commit himself full-time to his music.

It was a happy decision. Currently, on any given weekend, Mr. Hardwick and up to four of his orchestras can be found playing in various parts of the country, and occasionally overseas. On the Millennium Eve, there were seven Hardwick Sound groups performing — possibly too many.

Mr. Hardwick is exceptionally concerned about the quality of his bands, especially since he has to entrust his name, and his reputation, to stand-ins on a nightly basis. Could he organize even more orchestras under his name?

Perhaps, but he is wary of being able to handpick more than a certain number of top-notch players at a time.

This year Mr. Hardwick will personally perform at approximately 85 events; his various bands will play at another 100 or more. His orchestras range from 2 to 24 pieces, and he charges up to \$14,000 a night for his music.

What distinguishes The Hardwick Sound? It is lively, features a strong rhythm section, and brings people out to dance. His bands perform three types of music — "two-step", swing, and pop or rock. He is pleased that some of today's performers like Rod Stewart are popularizing the music of the 1930s and 1940s that is his stock in trade.

This is crucial, especially these days when brides tend to play a growing role in planning their weddings. Mothers used to make all the nuptial arrangements, but according to Mr. Hardwick this trend is changing. Thank heavens the daughters, too, seem to enjoy The Hardwick Sound.

What distinguishes Mr. Hardwick? In his own view, it is that he is extremely musical. That is not meant humorously; he does not think all musicians have that quality. An observer might also argue that he is unusually energetic.

He is perpetually in motion, recording, writing, and performing — at the moment in a cabaret act at the posh Everglades Club in Palm Beach, in addition to his usual dance events. He has his fingers in every conceivable musical pie. He has performed classical music before Isaac Stern, Kurt Masur and other intimidating figures, pop music with Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder and composed music with a variety of well known musicians.

He is without a doubt a highly charged and intense person — kept in shape by running, but also by playing. He claims to burn up more calories in an evening's performance than by running miles at a time.

Clearly, Mr. Hardwick is one of those fortunate people who enjoy their trade. Perhaps because he is extremely talented, and especially well suited to his profession. He is personable, good looking and mixes easily with the social types for whom he performs.

What's next for this dynamo? Certainly not retirement. Remember, Lester Lanin didn't retire until 94. Mr. Hardwick has a long way to go.