

National Endowment for the Arts Announces the 2010 NEA Jazz Masters

Nation's highest honor in jazz is bestowed on eight living legends

May 21, 2009

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Washington, DC - The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) today announced the recipients of the 2010 NEA Jazz Masters Award -- the nation's highest honor in this distinctly American music. The eight recipients will each receive a \$25,000 grant award and be publicly honored in an awards ceremony and concert on **Tuesday, January 12, 2010** at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

The eight 2010 NEA Jazz Masters are:

Muhai Richard Abrams, Pianist, Composer, Educator, New York, NY

Kenny Barron, Pianist, Composer, Educator, Brooklyn, NY

Bill Holman, Composer, Arranger, Saxophonist, Los Angeles, CA

Bobby Hutcherson, Vibraphonist, Marimbist, Composer, Montara, CA

Yusef Lateef, Saxophonist, Flutist, Oboist, Composer, Educator, Amherst, MA

Annie Ross, Vocalist, New York, NY

Cedar Walton, Pianist, Composer, Brooklyn, NY

George Avakian, a jazz producer, manager, critic, and educator from Riverdale, New York, will receive the 2010 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy.

"These master artists have dedicated their lives to shaping and advancing the rich tradition of jazz," said NEA Acting Chair Patrice Walker Powell. "The NEA is pleased to recognize their individual creative talents and celebrate their combined musical contributions."

For the January presentation, the Arts Endowment will again partner with Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City to produce the event, and the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and Arts Presenter's annual conference. Conference attendees will have the opportunity to attend some of the jazz master events and learn more about presenting jazz in the communities. The Awards Ceremony & Concert will be held at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, and will feature the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with

Wynton Marsalis in a program dedicated to the honorees' lives and works. Past collaborations between the NEA and Jazz at Lincoln Center include the NEA Jazz in the Schools curriculum -- available free of charge to high school teachers nationwide and used by nearly 8.4 million students since its inception. The NEA Jazz in the Schools Web site is a 2009 Webby Awards Official Honoree.

Each member of the 2010 NEA Jazz Masters class met the selection criteria of being a distinguished artist whose excellence, impact, and significant lifetime contributions have helped to keep jazz alive and further the growth of the art form:

The co-founder and first president of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), pianist **Muhai Richard Abrams** is highly respected by critics and musical peers as both a pianist and composer in a variety of musical styles.

Recognized the world over as a master of performance and composition, virtuoso pianist **Kenny Barron** has worked with such renowned musicians as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Haden, Roy Haynes, and fellow 2010 NEA Jazz Master Yusef Lateef.

Bill Holman's unique and complex arrangements have long been appreciated by musicians and critics alike, including Louie Bellson, Count Basie, Woody Herman, Buddy Rich, Doc Severinsen, and others.

Bobby Hutcherson's sound and style on the vibraphone helped modernize the instrument in the 1960s, adding an adventurous new voice to hard bop and free jazz.

A major force on the international musical scene for more than six decades, **Yusef Lateef** was among the first to incorporate world music into traditional jazz through his mastery of Middle Eastern and Asian reed instruments.

One of the early practitioners of the singing style known as "vocalese" -- the setting of original lyrics to an instrumental jazz solo -- **Annie Ross** was part of the renowned vocal trio Lambert, Hendricks & Ross.

One of the great hard bop pianists, **Cedar Walton** is also well-known for his distinctive compositions, which he first honed during his years with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers.

George Avakian is not only a record producer but a true pioneer in the industry. Besides producing some of the finest jazz albums of the 1950s for Columbia, including Miles Davis's *Miles Ahead* and Duke Ellington's *Ellington at Newport*, he helped establish the 33 1/3 LP as the primary format for the recording industry. He also was the first to produce reissues of long out-of-print jazz recordings.

Each year since 1982, the Arts Endowment has conferred the NEA Jazz Masters Award to living legends who have made major contributions to jazz. With this new class, the award has been given to 114 great figures of jazz in America, including Count Basie, George Benson, Art Blakey, Dave Brubeck, Betty Carter, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, Roy Eldridge, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Herbie Hancock, Elvin Jones, John Levy, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Cecil Taylor, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson, and Teddy Wilson.

About NEA Jazz Masters: NEA Jazz Masters are selected from nominations submitted by the public and receive a one-time grant award of \$25,000, are honored at a public awards ceremony, and may be offered opportunities for participation in NEA-sponsored promotional, performance, and educational activities under the NEA Jazz Masters National Initiative program. Only living musicians or jazz advocates may receive the NEA Jazz Masters honor.

The National Endowment for the Arts has supported jazz artists and organizations since 1969, providing millions of dollars in grants and awards. In 2004, the NEA significantly expanded its NEA Jazz Masters program and in 2005 created the NEA Jazz Masters Initiative, a comprehensive program of jazz support that includes the NEA Jazz Masters award; NEA Jazz Masters Live, a series of multiple performance and educational engagements in selected communities, featuring NEA Jazz Masters; radio programming featuring NEA Jazz Masters; educational resources through the NEA Jazz in the Schools program produced by the Arts Endowment in partnership with Jazz at Lincoln Center; and publications and reports. For more information on NEA Jazz Masters, including profiles and high-resolution photos, the public is invited to visit the Web site, at **www.neajazzmasters.org**.

Jazz at Lincoln Center is dedicated to inspiring and growing audiences for jazz. With the world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances a unique vision for the continued development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of performance, education and broadcast events for audiences of all ages. These productions include concerts, national and international tours, residencies, yearly hall of fame inductions, weekly national radio and television programs, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, jazz appreciation curriculum for students, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, adult education courses, student and educator workshops and interactive websites. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, Chairman Lisa Schiff and Executive Director, Adrian Ellis, Jazz at Lincoln Center produces thousands of events each season in its home in New York City, Frederick P. Rose Hall, and around the world. For more information visit **www.jalc.org**.