



WYNTON MARSALIS, Artistic Director  
KATHERINE E. BROWN, Executive Director

## Wynton Marsalis *Biography*

Jazz musician, trumpeter, composer, bandleader, advocate for the arts, and educator, **Wynton Marsalis** has helped propel jazz to the forefront of American culture. His prominent position in American culture was solidified in April 1997, when he became the first jazz artist to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize in music for his work *Blood on the Fields*, which was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center. He has served as the world-renowned arts organization's artistic director as well as music director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (formerly known as the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra since its inception).

### Musical Ingénue

At an early age, Marsalis exhibited seriousness about study, an aptitude for music, and a desire to contribute to American culture. On October 18, 1961, in New Orleans, Louisiana, he was born the second of six sons to Ellis and Dolores Marsalis. At age 8, he performed traditional New Orleans music in the Fairview Baptist Church band, led by legendary banjoist Danny Barker. Marsalis began studying the trumpet seriously at age 12, and gained experience as a young musician in local marching bands, jazz and funk bands, and classical youth orchestras. At 14, he was invited to perform the Haydn Trumpet Concerto with the New Orleans Philharmonic.

In 1979, Marsalis entered The Juilliard School in New York City to study classical trumpet but in the fall of 1979 he had the opportunity to sit in with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers and pursue his true love, jazz music. In the summer of 1980, he joined the acclaimed master drummer and bandleader Blakey's band, which inspired generations of emerging jazz artists to hone their craft. In the years to follow, Marsalis was invited to perform with Sarah Vaughan, Dizzy Gillespie, Gerry Mulligan, John Lewis, Sweets Edison, Clark Terry, Sonny Rollins, and countless other jazz legends.

### Acclaimed Musician, Composer, Bandleader

In 1982, Marsalis made his recording debut as a leader, and over the last two decades, he has produced a catalogue of more than 40 jazz and classical recordings for Columbia Jazz and Sony Classical, which have won him nine Grammy Awards. In 1983, he became the first and only artist to win both classical and jazz Grammy Awards in one year, and repeated this feat in 1984. In 1999, he released eight new recordings in his unprecedented *Swinging into the 21st* series, which includes a 7-CD boxed set of live performances from the Village Vanguard.

Not content to focus solely on his musicianship, Wynton has devoted equal time to developing his compositional skills. Embraced by the dance community for his penmanship, he has received commissions to create major compositions for Garth Fagan Dance, Peter Martins at the New York City Ballet, Twyla Tharp for the American Ballet Theatre, and Judith Jamison at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. In 1995, Marsalis with Jazz at Lincoln Center, collaborated with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to compose the string quartet *At the Octoroon Balls*, and again in 1998 to create a response to Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* with his composition *A Fiddler's Tale*.

In 1999, Marsalis presented his most ambitious work to date, *All Rise*, an epic composition for big band, gospel choir, and symphony orchestra, performed by the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Kurt Masur along with the Morgan State University Choir and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

Marsalis's rich body of work includes *Them Twos*, his first symphonic work and the second collaboration between Jazz at Lincoln Center and the New York City Ballet in 1999; *Big Train*, commissioned and

premiered in 1998 by Jazz at Lincoln Center; *Sweet Release*, a score for ballet written in 1996 for the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and choreographed by Judith Jamison for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; *Jazz: Six Syncopated Movements*, from the 1993 Jazz at Lincoln Center collaboration with the New York City Ballet; *Jump Start*, a score written for dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp; *Citi Movement/Griot New York*, a three-movement composition created in collaboration with choreographer Garth Fagan; and *In This House, On This Morning*, an extended piece based on the form of a traditional gospel service, commissioned and premiered by Jazz at Lincoln Center in 1992. Marsalis signed to Blue Note Records in 2003, and his debut CD, a quartet recording entitled *The Magic Hour*, was released March 9, 2004. On November 30, he followed up his Blue Note debut with *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*, the companion soundtrack recording to Ken Burns' PBS documentary of the great African-American boxer. His recent album, *Wynton Marsalis: Live at The House Of Tribes* was released in 2005.

### Advocate, Educator, Cultural Leader

Marsalis's commitment to improving people's lives through music and his contributions to the arts paint a portrait of his character and humanity. He is internationally respected as a teacher and a spokesman for music education, having received honorary degrees from 29 of the nation's leading academic institutions, including Columbia, Brown, Princeton, and Yale universities.

In 1987, Marsalis co-founded a jazz program at Lincoln Center. In December 1996, the Lincoln Center Board rewarded the jazz department's significant success by voting it a full constituent, equal in stature with the ten other organizations on campus including the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera and New York City Ballet—a historic moment for jazz as an art form and for Lincoln Center as a cultural institution. Jazz at Lincoln Center has developed an international agenda with up to 500 events annually around the world.

Under Marsalis's direction, Jazz at Lincoln Center programming offers performances, lectures, film forums, dances, television and Peabody Award winning radio broadcasts as part of the *Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio with Ed Bradley* national radio program, recordings, and jazz education including programs for people of all ages and music publishing. Marsalis regularly conducts master classes, lectures and concerts for students, including the popular Jazz at Lincoln Center Jazz for Young People<sup>SM</sup> concerts that spawned the first-ever comprehensive jazz appreciation curriculum of the same name for 4-9<sup>th</sup> grades. Educational activities also include the annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition and Festival that has reached more than 3,500 bands in North American and Australia, and the Band Director Academy.

Marsalis donates his time and talent to non-profit organizations throughout the country to help raise money to meet the many needs within our society. From My Sister's Place (a shelter for battered women) to Graham Windham (a shelter for homeless children), the Children's Defense Fund, Amnesty International, Sloan-Kettering Cancer Institute, Food For All Seasons (a food bank for the elderly and disadvantaged), Very Special Arts (an organization that provides experiences in dance, drama, literature, and music for individuals with physical and mental disabilities) to the Newark Boys Chorus School (a full-time academic music school for disadvantaged youths).

He also has brought the spirit of jazz into the homes of millions of people through television programs such as *Marsalis on Music*, Ken Burns' *Jazz* and *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (PBS) and the newly launched BET Jazz series *Journey with Jazz at Lincoln Center*, and with the radio series *Making the Music* for National Public Radio (NPR), which won a Peabody Award in 1996. Marsalis released *To a Young Musician: Letters from the Road*, published by Random House in 2004, as well as *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, a collaboration with Jazz at Lincoln Center photographer Frank Stewart. In October 2005, Candlewick Press will release Marsalis's *Jazz ABZ*, an A to Z collection of 26 poems celebrating jazz greats, illustrated by poster artist Paul Rogers.

### Worldwide Recognition

For his many achievements, *Time* magazine selected Marsalis as one of America's most promising leaders under age 40 in 1995, and in 1996 *Time* celebrated Marsalis as one of "America's 25 Most Influential People." He also was named one of "The 50 Most Influential Boomers" by *Life* magazine.

In the spring of 2001, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan proclaimed Marsalis an international ambassador of goodwill by appointing him a United Nations Messenger of Peace. He also has been awarded the Congressional Horizon Award, the French Grand Prix du Disque, the Louis Armstrong Memorial Medal, the Netherlands' Edison Award, and the Algur H. Meadows Award for Excellence in the Arts, and has received countless plaques as well as keys to more than 50 cities. He has been inducted into the American Academy of Achievement, and was dubbed an Honorary Dreamer by the "I Have a Dream Foundation." He also has received a citation from the United States House of Representatives for his outstanding contributions to the arts. The *Higher Ground Hurricane Relief* concert produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center has raised over \$2 million for relief efforts. Marsalis serves as Co-Chair on Lieutenant Governor Landrieu's National Advisory Board for Culture, Recreation and Tourism, a national advisory board to guide the Lieutenant Governor's administration's plans to rebuild Louisiana's tourism and cultural economies. He has also been named to the Bring Back New Orleans Commission, New Orleans Mayor C.

Ray Nagin's initiative to help rebuild New Orleans culturally, socially, economically, and uniquely for every citizen.

As Jazz at Lincoln Center's artistic director and as music director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Marsalis continues to spread the spirit of swing and raise awareness of jazz in the consciousness of the American public and the world.

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