

Initiated in 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Fellowship is the nation’s highest honor given to those who have devoted their lives and careers to jazz, an art form uniquely rooted in American history and culture. Described by the *New York Times* as a “rare public accolade for jazz,” the recipients range from vocalists and percussionists to vibraphonists and saxophonists to advocates of the music—all of whom have advanced the art form through their commitment to jazz.

Number of  
NEA Jazz Masters  
Fellowships,  
1982-2022:

165

## LIFETIME HONORS IN JAZZ

NEA Jazz Masters are living legends who have made major contributions to jazz, including

- Toshiko Akiyoshi
- Carla Bley
- Dee Dee Bridgewater
- Dave Brubeck
- Chick Corea
- Miles Davis
- Paquito D’Rivera
- Ella Fitzgerald
- Sheila Jordan
- Abbey Lincoln
- Charles Lloyd
- Pat Metheny
- Dianne Reeves
- Sonny Rollins

The National Endowment for the Arts recognizes up to four artists each year, with each receiving a one-time fellowship of up to \$25,000.

In 2004, the Arts Endowment inaugurated the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy, given to an individual who has made major contributions to the appreciation, knowledge, and advancement of the American jazz art form. Recipients include

- Author, editor, producer, and educator Ira Gitler
- Jazz club owner Lorraine Gordon
- Jazz advocate Dorthaan Kirk
- Recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder
- Producer and pianist George Wein

Fellowships are awarded to living individuals on the basis of nominations from the public including the jazz community. Nominations are judged by a panel of experts, including administrators, performers, producers, and a knowledgeable layperson. The National Endowment for the Arts encourages nominations of a broad range of individuals who have been significant to the field of jazz, through vocals and instrumental performance, creative leadership, and education.

## CELEBRATING THE HONOREES

Each year, the National Endowment for the Arts honors the incoming class of NEA Jazz Masters Fellows at a public event. The 2022 NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concert, a collaboration with SFJAZZ, will take place on Thursday, March 31, 2022,

at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, California, and live streamed.

Past tribute concerts are available to watch on the [NEA's YouTube channel](#).

## CREATING AND SHARING CONTENT

Learn more about the NEA Jazz Masters at [arts.gov/honors/jazz](https://arts.gov/honors/jazz). There you will find:

Individual bio pages for all of the honorees with selected discographies, video tributes, and short audio clips featuring musical excerpts and interviews with and about the NEA Jazz Masters, such as:

- Carla Bley on Miles Davis and moving to NYC,
- Branford Marsalis reflecting on being a bad student,
- Herbie Hancock and the popularity of his composition *Watermelon Man*,
- Dr. Lonnie Smith on the sweet sound of the Hammond B-3 organ.

Visit our [podcast section](#) to listen to one-on-one interviews with NEA Jazz Masters honorees, such as Sonny Rollins, Terri Lyne Carrington, and Henry Threadgill.

Explore the NEA's [YouTube channel](#) for videos from past NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concerts.

The National Endowment for the Arts also supported the [Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program](#), which documented the lives and careers of nearly 100 NEA Jazz Masters. In addition to transcriptions of comprehensive interviews, the website also includes audio clips with interview excerpts.

