

Initiated in 1982, the NEA 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 represent a panoply of musical distinction, from vocalists and percussionists to vibraphonists and saxophonists—all of whom have advanced the music through their commitment to jazz.

**Number of  
NEA Jazz Masters  
since 1982:**

**145**

## HONORING THE MASTERS

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

- Carla Bley
- Dee Dee Bridgewater
- Dave Brubeck
- Miles Davis
- Paquito D'Rivera
- Ella Fitzgerald
- Abbey Lincoln
- Eddie Palmieri
- Sonny Rollins
- Cecil Taylor
- Nancy Wilson

The NEA recognizes up to five artists each year, with each receiving a one-time fellowship of \$25,000.

In 2004, the NEA inaugurated the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy, given to an individual whose passion for jazz and its artists has been demonstrated through major contributions to the appreciation, knowledge, and advancement of the music. Recipients include

- Jazz club owner Lorraine Gordon
- Critic Nat Hentoff
- Manager and bassist John Levy
- Musicians' Advocate Wendy Oxenhorn
- Recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder

Fellowships are awarded to living individuals on the basis of nominations from the public including the jazz community. The NEA encourages nominations of a broad range of men and women who have been significant to the field of jazz, through vocals and instrumental performance, creative leadership, and education.

## CONNECTING THE MASTERS TO AUDIENCES

Each year's artists are honored at a tribute concert that is open to the public and streamed online. The concert is programmed with musical tributes to each incoming NEA Jazz Master.

Also featured in the concert and available on the NEA's YouTube channel are video bios featuring interviews with the Jazz Master. The 2014, 2015, and 2016 tribute concerts are archived on the NEA's YouTube channel in whole and in selected excerpts.

## CREATING AND SHARING CONTENT

In addition, the [NEA website](#) contains a wealth of free jazz content.

### Audio

- **Jazz Moments**—30-90 second audio clips of musical excerpts and interviews with and about 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*
  - Keith Jarrett on needing the audience
- **Podcasts:** One-on-one interviews with a Jazz Master running approximately 30 minutes.

### Video

- **Video interviews** with NEA Jazz Masters running approximately five minutes
- **Complete concerts** from 2014, 2015, and 2016
- **Concert excerpts** from 2014, 2015, and 2016

### Text and photos

- **Publications:** Each year the NEA produces a collection of profiles of that year's NEA Jazz Masters class with brief biographies and selected discographies. Available online and in print.
- **Features:** Recent blog posts include *How to Get Your Kids Interested in Jazz* and *Across Disciplines: When Jazz Inspires Poetry*
- **Photos:** Individual portraits and event images

The NEA also supports the [Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program](#), an effort to document the lives and careers of NEA Jazz Masters. In addition to transcriptions of the comprehensive interviews, the website also includes audio clips with interview excerpts. This project has transcribed the oral histories of more than 90 NEA Jazz Masters.

