

# NEA ARTS

NUMBER 4 2009

Connecting Artists and Audiences



PRESENTING  
AND JAZZ

# NEA ARTS

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### ABOUT THE ISSUE

Creating a performance work may start behind closed doors, but eventually the dancer, the musician, the actor is ready to leave the studio for the stage to present the finished work to an audience. Presenting the performance is an art in itself—from programming seasons to building audiences to making spaces that are welcoming for both artists and audiences. So the interaction between presenters and artists is crucial to the success of both. This issue of *NEA Arts* highlights what it takes to make art happen in public and features the NEA Jazz Masters Fellowships, which celebrate not only master performing artists but also, through the A.B. Spellman Award for Jazz Advocacy, those who are masters at creating environments—both literally and metaphorically—in which jazz can flourish.

A special web feature can be found at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov) on Teatro Avante's experience performing overseas through the NEA's USArtists International program, produced in partnership with Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.

### ABOUT THE COVER

*Jazz Lives* by Debra Hurd. Debra Hurd is a visual artist and musician living in Austin, Texas. She has been acclaimed for her vivid city scenes and her passionate and perceptive depictions of musicians, using dramatic color and

texture. Hurd is also an accomplished pianist, recording and playing live in Austin.



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS



Lebanon's Caracalla Dance Theatre performed *Knights of Moon* as part of Washington, DC's Kennedy Center festival in spring 2009, Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World.

PHOTO BY CAROL PRATT

# Focusing on the Work

BY PAULETTE BEETE

## Arts Presenting in Hard Times

"WARY AND CAUTIOUS—presenters are highly sensitive to weakening indicators." That headline from the January 2009 Association of Performing Arts Presenters tracking survey captures the state of arts presenting in the current economic recession. Arts organizations throughout the country are taking special measures to mitigate their budget shortfalls: hiring freezes, reduced and safe programming, higher ticket prices. Not surprising, in these precarious times, many organizations feel pressure—from their boards of directors, from senior management—to stick with tried and true productions rather than new works. Still, some organizations feel their mission is to search out new and interesting art and present it to their communities.

Located in Washington, DC, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts programs about 2,000 free and ticketed performances each year, including themed multidisciplinary festivals, live theater, and symphony performances. A visual arts museum as well as a presenter, the Walker Arts Center presents about 25–30 performing arts projects each season, including presentations of existing repertoire, commissions, and extended artist residencies and public performances. While differing in scale, each organization remains enthusiastically committed to not just presenting existing work but also presenting, and even commissioning, new work that has not already received the seal of approval from critics and audiences.

***"Unless arts organizations  
are helping seed the future . . .  
there won't be things to present  
in 10 or 15 or 20 years."***

As the Walker's Senior Performing Arts Curator Philip Bither explained, "Even as the finances have gotten tight, we've held firmly to the belief that it's essential to continue to commission work and find new ways to support the making of new projects. We are sometimes discouraged that we see a decline of commissioning happening on a national level; it's inspired us to actually try to commission more than we ever have." Bither views commissioning as an investment in the future. "Unless arts organizations are helping seed the future with new plays and new kinds of performances, dances works, new musical compositions, there won't be things to present in 10 or 15 or 20 years." He also feels that the arts gain their relevance by responding to contemporary issues and situations, and suggests that performance works we now consider classic masterpieces were also timely at the moment of their creation.

Kennedy Center President Michael Kaiser agrees that despite the shaky economy, now is not the time

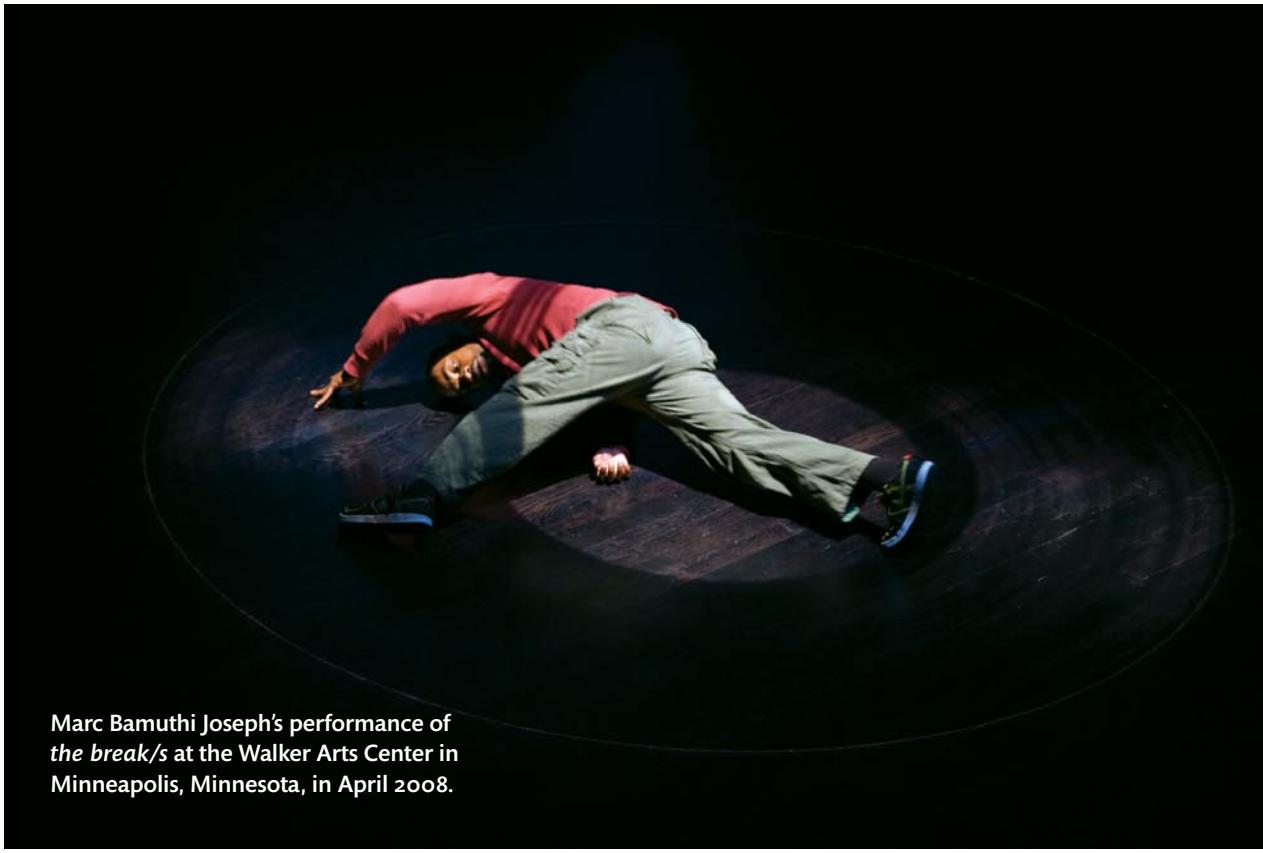
for arts organizations to turn conservative with programming. "I read so often now [that] now is the time to do accessible work, now is the time to play it safe. The problem is when you play it safe, if everyone plays it safe, we're all boring, and funders will go elsewhere. We're finding that the more interesting work is the work that draws more audiences and draws more funders."

Bither echoed Kaiser's sentiment. "I would encourage my presenting colleagues in general that sometimes the smartest thing to do is to take the biggest risk. Surprisingly we have found that sometimes the scariest projects, the most ambitious and audacious undertakings, have delivered the greatest rewards...not just in terms of cultural attention and great art being supported or created, but it also comes back in the form of foundation resources. Grants officers are still looking at who is out there trying to challenge themselves and stay relevant to the culture and develop new models that might better serve the field down the road."

Many arts organizations address the growing deficit between income and production costs by some combination of raising ticket prices, limiting the number of productions in a season, and producing smaller shows, a solution that Kaiser characterized as "problematic." For example, skyrocketing ticket prices can actually decrease audience size as more people lose economic access to arts events. "When you keep raising your ticket prices, as we've done for the last 30 years in the arts (more than any other industry), you start to disenfranchise whole groups of people," opined Kaiser. "Then we're surprised when people say the arts are irrelevant. They're not irrelevant; they're just too expensive."

The Walker has looked for vehicles other than increasing ticket costs or contributor income to address financial challenges; for example, through collaboration. As Bither explained, "Very infrequently [is the Walker] the sole commissioner of a new work. I think collaboration and cooperation between arts entities that's on a national scale and on a local level are really part of what we define as requirements that allow us to be fiscally responsible and still support new work." Last year the Walker partnered with the Humana Festival of New American Plays, to coproduce *the break/s*, a one-man play by Marc Bamuthi Joseph; in the works is a co-commission with the Saint Paul Chamber Or-

➲ An extended audio version of Josephine Reed's interview with Michael Kaiser and a video of the Walker Art Center's April 2008 production of *the break/s* by Marc Bamuthi Joseph can be found on the NEA website at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).



Marc Bamuthi Joseph's performance of *the break/s* at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in April 2008.

PHOTO BY GENE PITTMAN

chestra of a contemporary jazz work.

Collaboration is also a key strategy for Kaiser. "I'm a very big believer in joint ventures. If right now you can't do the biggest production known to mankind, do it with someone else." As an example, he cites his tenure with American Ballet Theatre which—in Kaiser's words—was "basically bankrupt" when he took the helm. An ambitious new commission co-produced with the San Francisco Ballet helped the company to leverage its limited resources and regain its financial footing.

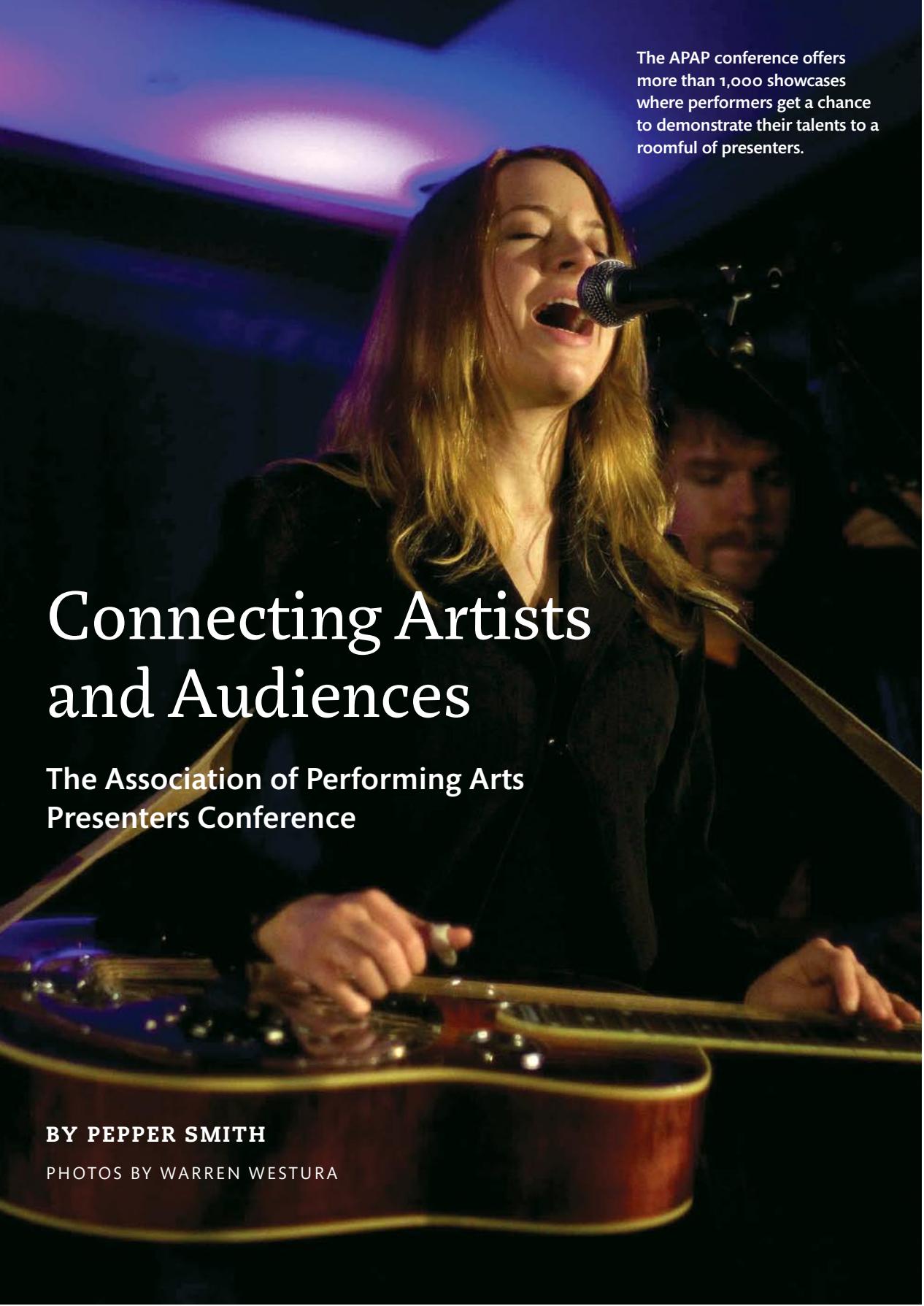
The Walker also stretches its budget by offering artists in-kind resources, which at the Walker means access to its five-year-old, state-of-the-art performance space with the technicians to run it. Another in-kind resource is the access to Minneapolis' local talent pool. For example, if a particular dance work requires 20 performers, but the choreographer can only afford to travel with eight company members, the cast is augmented through local auditions. This not only saves costs, but also works toward audience development. As Bither described, "It helps ground a work in a community that suddenly feels ownership on that project in a new way because their neighbor or friend

or child is actually deeply involved in the making and presenting of the work."

Bither suggested that, given the economic climate, it's especially important to let artists know that there's a place for them to make work. "You know it's a very vulnerable and lonely place, especially for emerging and mid-career artists, to not know who's out there that might believe in them enough to not just put on their last hit but to actually support their next idea. I think in many instances the Walker saying to an artist, 'We believe in you, and we want to help make this great idea you have come to life,' is equally important, if not more so, than the cash we can put on the table or the range of resources we can provide."

Of course, it's one thing to provide the financial and other resources for artists to create and present new work; it's quite another to get audiences in the door when just going to the movies has become a major expense, much less a ballet, opera, or stage play. Kaiser and Bither agree that presenting interesting, even risky, programming is crucial to keeping existing audiences and developing new ones. "[T]he arts organizations that are successful are the ones that

*Continued on page 11*

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair singing into a microphone. She is wearing a dark jacket. In the background, a man is playing a guitar. The lighting is dramatic, with purple and blue hues. A text box is positioned in the upper right corner.

The APAP conference offers  
more than 1,000 showcases  
where performers get a chance  
to demonstrate their talents to a  
roomful of presenters.

# Connecting Artists and Audiences

**The Association of Performing Arts  
Presenters Conference**

**BY PEPPER SMITH**

PHOTOS BY WARREN WESTURA

**K**EN FISCHER, executive director of the University of Michigan's University Musical Society (UMS), has faced a 40 to 50 percent decline in funding over the last three years. His major contributor, Pfizer, has left the state, which has gone from being one of the top five arts funders to the bottom five. "What are you going to do in these times?" Fischer asked, as UMS has already eliminated five positions and cut the salaries of everyone making more than \$50,000.

"For us, it's fairly simple. It's always going to be art first and connecting artists and audiences in uncommon and engaging experiences...and we're going to APAP."

APAP, of course, means the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Conference in New York City from January 8-12, 2010. With an expected attendance of more than 4,000 presenters, the APAP conference is

The 2010 APAP conference includes professional development sessions for artists and presenters, with a special emphasis on jazz this year.

the largest meeting of its kind, "a network of networks and convener of conveners," in the words of APAP Executive Director Sandra Gibson. It is a huge, unwieldy conference that itself plays host to many complementary state, regional, national, and international meetings.

The Association of Performing Arts Presenters began in 1957 when a group of college university concert managers joined forces to address changes in the performing arts field. (Its founder, Frances Taylor, would later become the first director of the Music program at the National Endowment for the Arts.) The association quickly expanded to include regional, state, and local arts agencies; service organizations; producing companies; artist managements; booking agencies; and individual artists. Today APAP represents an industry with more than 7,000 not-for-profit and for-profit organizations that bring performances to more than two million audience-goers each week and spend in excess of 2.5 billion dollars annually.

People come to the conference for various reasons,  
*Continued on page 16*



BY DON BALL

PHOTOS BY TOM PICH

# A Great Spiritual Legacy

The NEA Jazz Masters Awards Ceremony and Concert

NEA Jazz Masters  
Quincy Jones (seated)  
and Tom McIntosh  
at the 2008 reunion  
lunch.



**ROY HAYNES MUGS FOR THE CAMERA WITH CHICK COREA AND RON CARTER,** a veritable jazz super-trio in the making. Billy Taylor greets Jimmy Scott with a hug and a smile. Quincy Jones, known the world over, chats with Tom McIntosh, little known outside of jazz circles but as a result of being named an NEA Jazz Master getting better known. These are just a few of the moments from the NEA Jazz Masters luncheon, one of the few places you can find an entire room of jazz legends in the same

place at the same time. That's why so many of them look forward to the annual NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony and concert, where 38 NEA Jazz Masters are planning to attend at Jazz at Lincoln Center in January 2010. The special reunion luncheon is just one of many Arts Endowment-sponsored events to occur around the ceremony, for the first time being presented in tandem with the Association of Performing Arts Presenters conference.

The ceremony begins each year with a roll call of the jazz greats that have gathered to honor their peers. From the darkened stage emerge some of the greatest American artists of the last hundred or so years: Ornette Coleman. Paquito D'Rivera. Nancy Wilson. James Moody. Randy Weston. Chico Hamilton. NEA Jazz Masters one and all. And the annual NEA Jazz Masters awards concert has begun again, recognizing all of these great American artists who have made such an impact on United States culture.

This year, seven new master musicians join their ranks: Muhal Richard Abrams, Kenny Barron, Bill Holman, Bobby Hutcherson, Yusef Lateef, Annie Ross, and Cedar Walton, as well as record producer/executive George Avakian, who received the A. B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy.

The NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship is the nation's highest honor in jazz, recognizing one of the preeminent indigenous art forms to emerge from the United States. Born of the blues emanating from the plantations of the South, and steeped and simmered in New Orleans, jazz grew into a full-force artistic entity in the 1920s and 30s, spreading throughout the country, with each locale developing over time its own flavor of the music. From New York to Chicago, from Kansas



NEA Jazz Masters Chick Corea, Roy Haynes, and Ron Carter in New York City for the 2006 NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony.

City to Los Angeles, the new musical language of jazz evolved into a potent art form.

The continuum of jazz is represented by the NEA Jazz Masters. From Danny Barker, born in New Orleans in 1909 and working with such early greats as Barney Bigard, James P. Johnson, and Little Brother Montgomery, to the swing greats Count Basie and Andy Kirk, to the bebop of Dizzy Gillespie and the cool jazz of Miles Davis, to the vocal power of Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan and the avant garde of Andrew Hill and Cecil Taylor. The legacy of these master artists, both those still working and those that have passed on, is handed down generation to generation. NEA Jazz Master Randy Weston noted his place in this long line of greats when he received his award in 2001: "I am grateful to be a part of a great spiritual legacy. Thanks to the ancestors and the great musicians who have inspired me."

Jazz has moved far from its roots in the bordellos of New Orleans to being feted by the U.S. Congress in 1987. House Concurrent Resolution 57, introduced by Representative John Conyers Jr. (Michigan-14th Dis-

trict) and passed by the 100th Congress of the United States of America, declared "that it is the sense of the Congress that jazz is hereby designated as a rare and valuable national American treasure to which we should devote our attention, support and resources to make certain it is preserved, understood and promulgated."

Despite such accolades, jazz still requires nurturing to continue to grow, and that was the point of expanding the scope of the NEA Jazz Masters program to increase public awareness of the art form. As honoree Frank Foster has noted, "Although jazz has been officially declared a national treasure in recent years, far too few of its representative artists ever receive sufficient acknowledgement in the mass media. In view of this unfortunate reality, it's quite fitting and honorable that a prestigious entity such as the National Endowment for the Arts recognizes the artistic, aesthetic, and spiritual value of this homegrown music."

But the influence of jazz has transcended national boundaries—all over the world people have found this art form intoxicating, from Latin America to Europe to Africa to Asia. The international impact of this music cannot be underestimated, as Dave Brubeck pointed out: "If you listened to my recordings in the Soviet Union during the darkest days of the Cold War,

you could be sent to Siberia or worse. They listened to my records, and they called it 'Jazz in Bones.' Using x-ray plates, they could record Willis Conover and get a fairly good recording. If you were caught with that, you were dead. But the doctors and the nurses and the students would very carefully listen to these recordings, and they had underground jazz meetings all the time. This is the power that we have with jazz, because it's the voice of freedom all over the world."

The great singer Tony Bennett himself has declared jazz "one of America's greatest contributions to world culture." As one who has traveled around the world many times, he would know.

Like the NEA National Heritage Fellowships—which honor those in the folk arts—the NEA Jazz Masters began awarding a non-performer award in 2004. To honor those whose tireless championing of jazz helped perpetuate the music, the NEA introduced the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy, named after the author, poet, and former NEA Deputy Chairman who has dedicated much of his life to bringing the joy and artistry of jazz to all Americans.

Other recent additions to the program include an educational component, NEA Jazz in the Schools, and a performance initiative, NEA Jazz Masters Live (both of which are discussed at length in other articles in this issue). To further broaden audience reach, the NEA also is utilizing the Internet and broadcast media. More than 150 *Jazz Moments*, radio shorts featuring NEA Jazz Masters, have been produced by the agency and broadcast on stations throughout the country (they are available on the NEA website: [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov)). In partnership with the Smithsonian Institution on their Jazz Oral History Program, recordings



NEA Jazz Master Dave Brubeck performing at the 2004 awards ceremony.



Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra at the 2009 awards ceremony.

of comprehensive interviews with NEA Jazz Masters are available for free on the Smithsonian Jazz website ([www.smithsonianjazz.org/oral\\_histories/joh\\_start.asp](http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/oral_histories/joh_start.asp)).

Given the dwindling audiences in jazz (and all the arts), generating new enthusiasm for the music is an essential component of the NEA Jazz Masters program. As Benny Golson said in an NEA interview, "Jazz is an indigenous culture that generates its own energy. But it also invokes energy from the people who listen. They become a part of the fabric from a listening point of view which in turn encourages the performers. It creates a symbiosis."

And the NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony makes this clear. As the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, led by Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, launches into a song composed by an awardee that has become a standard in the field, or an NEA Jazz Master takes the stage to trade eights with the band, the audience—those at Rose Hall or at home, listening via live broadcasts on the radio and Internet—is caught up in sharing a personal and musical experience with these artists. It demonstrates the power and vitality of the arts to create this shared experience, this symbiosis, where both the artist and the audience are enriched. And that is what the NEA Jazz Masters program is all about—recognizing these great musicians for their achievements and sharing them with the world. ♫

See highlights from past NEA Jazz Masters events at the NEA website at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

## Focusing on the Work

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are constantly welcoming new people in and building stronger and stronger relationships to their constituencies and communities," said Kaiser. "The ones that are going to get in trouble eventually are the ones who are holding on for dear life to the people who they currently know." To diversify its audience, in spring 2009, the Kennedy Center programmed a festival around the arts of the Arab world, which Kaiser describes as, "not accessible, not safe. We sold 92 percent of the tickets. We raised more for that production than we have for any other production in our history."

Despite its challenges, Kaiser and Bither agree that the fraught financial times have a silver lining. Artists and arts organizations alike have had to pare back to the essentials and rediscover their missions. Kaiser

**Based in the Lady of Damascus Church in Syria, the Al-Farah Choir, including more than 100 children, performed Byzantine, Muslim, and Arab songs as part of the Kennedy Center's festival Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World.**

elaborated: "So many organizations have suffered from mission drift, which means they have one central thing they're trying to do but over the years—because they got a grant or because they had a special idea that started to broaden or change—they started to not really have a very clear mission. Now a lot of organizations are having to go back and say, 'Let's really focus on the work we really want to do.'"

For Bither, the true work of the presenter is to share the voice of the artist, which he believes is needed now more than ever. "I look to artists to really be the ones to help guide us as a society in sorting through some very complicated, very wrenching changes that we're seeing both in our country and the world at large."

Ultimately, regardless of the economy, Kaiser believes that to remain relevant, viable, and to keep supporting artists, arts organizations need to take a two-pronged approach. "To really distill it down, I'd say the key thing I do is focus on art, to make the art really interesting, and then I focus on what I call institutional marketing, which gets people really excited about what the organization does as a whole. It's those two elements that I think are so crucial, and I think when times get tough, so many organizations forget both of those." ☀



PHOTO BY MARGOT SCHULMAN

# Making an impression

NEA JAZZ MASTERS LIVE INITIATIVE

BY LIZ STARK

*According to* the National Endowment for the Arts' 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, the number of people attending jazz performances is decreasing and its audiences are growing older, causing *Wall Street Journal* critic (and National Council on the Arts member) Terry Teachout to ask, "Can Jazz Be Saved?" His article set in motion engaged discussions—including letters to the editors, blogger postings, and newspaper and magazine articles—reflecting that jazz is still an important part of the nation's cultural life. This does not negate the importance of continuing to promote jazz and introduce new audiences around the country to this uniquely American art form. "We all need to be exposed to young people who are interested in our music," said NEA Jazz Master Jimmy Heath. "And if we don't get younger audiences to come out, we're going to lose our hold on our culture."

The NEA has been addressing the need to give jazz more exposure with its NEA Jazz Masters Live initiative. Started in 2008, NEA Jazz Masters Live provides opportunities for audiences to hear jazz but with a focus on creating more intimate opportunities for audiences to get to know these great American art-

ists through multiple-event, extended engagements. Terri Pontremoli, executive and artistic director of the Detroit International Jazz Festival, an NEA Jazz Masters Live grantee, said, "The NEA Jazz Masters themselves really do embrace the notion of reaching people through education and their stories and the things they have to say. And the fact that people have access



NEA Jazz Master Hank Jones on the Main Stage  
Opening Night of the 2009 Detroit International Jazz  
Festival.

PHOTO BY ARA HOWRANI



PHOTO BY JEFF FORMAN

to these artists, where they're actually able to shake their hand and have them sign an old record or a CD, is really meaningful and you don't always get that in performance situations."

NEA Jazz Masters Live is a continuation of the successful NEA Jazz Masters on Tour program that was started in 2004 in partnership with Arts Midwest. Between 2005 and 2007, 28 NEA Jazz Masters toured around the country, resulting in 193 performances, plus accompanying education and outreach programs. More than 165,000 people saw a jazz performance—many for the first time—as a result of this program, including more than 40,000 youth, creating new audiences for this American art form. Already, in its first year, NEA Jazz Masters Live has reached more than 47,000 people, including 3,800 youth.

As part of NEA Jazz Masters on Tour, Jimmy Heath performed at nine different venues between 2005 and 2007 in locations from Seattle, Washington, to Fargo,

NEA Jazz Master Gerald Wilson (right) conducts the world premiere performance of his composition "Detroit," commissioned for the 2009 Detroit International Jazz Festival.

North Dakota, to Huntsville, Alabama. "As a Jazz Master, we've been underrepresented in this country since the beginning," said Heath. "And to be a Jazz Master that's not visible... well, it doesn't mean anything unless we have performances, and the support of those performances is crucial." Heath has gone on to perform as part of NEA Jazz Masters Live, including Detroit International Jazz Festival's 30th anniversary in September 2009.

Pontremoli described NEA Jazz Masters Live as a "perfect fit" for Detroit's festival. Taking place over four days, the festival not only includes performances, but a Jazz Talk Tent, where audiences can become more educated about the performers they hear and

the history of the music. For 2009, the festival's 30th anniversary, the free festival included six NEA Jazz Masters: Dave Brubeck, Chick Corea, Jimmy Heath, Hank Jones, Wayne Shorter, and Gerald Wilson. Getting such talent isn't easy financially, but the support of an NEA Jazz Masters Live grant made it possible. Pontremoli said, "It helps us as an organization to be able to say, 'Hey, we have NEA Jazz Masters support.' That's meaningful in leveraging other funding."

With this support, the festival was able to have Wayne Shorter both perform and appear at the Jazz Talk Tent, a rare appearance according to Pontremoli. In the *Detroit News*, an article about the festival stated, "The festival has scored some coups this year and getting saxophonist Wayne Shorter is one of them. At age 76, he may be a gray eminence but, trust me, the emphasis is on eminence." Such opportunities are excep-

tional for tried and true jazz fans, but it also goes a long way in creating bonds with new jazz audiences. "Truly, for the kids that come to play at our festival, all the high school band kids and college band kids, to come and to have that kind of access to the Jazz Masters is really special," said Pontremoli.

Another hallmark of the NEA Jazz Masters Live program is creating opportunities for multiple NEA Jazz Masters to appear in a presentation. Many of the NEA Jazz Masters' histories are entwined and bringing them together creates unique and unforgettable experiences for the audiences. At the Flynn Center

NEA Jazz Master Jimmy Heath (second from left) at a discussion of Cannonball Adderley with (from left) Christian McBride, Louis Hayes, and Bob Porter at the 2009 Detroit International Jazz Festival's Jazz Talk Tent.



PHOTO BY ARA HOWRANI



PHOTO BY JEFF FORMAN

for the Performing Arts in Burlington, Vermont, they are planning for their June 2010 Discover Jazz Festival. With their NEA Jazz Masters Live grant they have arranged for both Jim Hall and Sonny Rollins to perform. Artistic Director Arnie Malina describes how this unique experience came about: "Jim Hall performed on Sonny Rollins' famous recording *The Bridge*. So Sonny agreed to have Jim Hall come and perform a duet with him. I don't think they've done that for a really long time, so that will be an extra dimension to the residency."

In addition to the special connections between artists, Malina's festival also provides opportunities for audience members and students to interact with the NEA Jazz Masters through workshops and Meet the Artist sessions. Local musicians will also have the opportunity to work and perform with Hall. "It's like a community project," said Malina. "The players that we have are excellent, and it's an opportunity for local professional players to interact with major artists and it gives them further opportunities."

At both the Detroit International Jazz Festival and

NEA Jazz Master Wayne Shorter performs with his quartet on the Carhartt Amphitheatre Stage at the 2009 Detroit International Jazz Festival.

the Discover Jazz Festival, the NEA Jazz Masters play an important part in diverse lineups that include both established and emerging artists. By engaging these NEA Jazz Masters as part of their events, the grant recipients are making a commitment to supporting the future of jazz and those who helped develop the art form. Heath sees value in performing at such festivals where there's a range of musicians presented. He describes the younger musicians as "just super performers. And they will eventually bring in some of their younger audiences. And if we happen to be performing at the same time, we'll be exposed as the veterans or, in some cases, the creators of the music."

At the heart of the NEA Jazz Masters Live program is the opportunity to not only bring greater visibility to the NEA Jazz Masters' incredible artistic skill, but also to give audiences new and exciting insights into the history and culture of jazz as only these artists can provide. And, as a result of these events, the NEA hopes to create a new generation of jazz fans. As Jimmy Heath says, "Every time you make an appearance, you make an impression." ♪

## Connecting Artists and Audiences

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but mainly to learn about the business, to find new talent, and to connect with their peers.

When Ken Fischer comes to the conference, he brings along a crew of 12 to 15 others from his staff, as he's done for the last 24 years. (Several will be interns who, thanks to an APAP program, attend for free in exchange for assisting with the conference.) Though times for arts funding have been particularly bad in Michigan, Fischer still believes it is critical to bring as many people as possible to APAP: "We definitely get back in value every penny we spend."

For Fischer, "It's all about personal relationships. I mean, most of the business we do, we do with the artists' management coming to see us or over the phone. For us, this conference is about deepening relationships, touching base, and checking in, as opposed to signing your name on the line."

Barbara Nicholson, executive director of the King Arts Complex in Columbus, Ohio, on the other hand, is coming to the conference looking for fundraising solutions. Due to tough economic times in Columbus, the King Arts Complex cancelled a popular summer arts series in order to use those funds to support a summer camp for at-risk youth. "It's hard to compete for arts funding when you're worried about feeding people and keeping a roof over their heads," said Nicholson.

"Expenses are our number one priority. How can we project a deficit and still take care of our community? It's a Catch-22...but we have to stay in business. Now, more than ever, the arts need to inspire people to hope. We feed the spirit. We feed the soul. I'm hoping to find some answers by connecting with people in the same boat!"

One such opportunity will be the open clinic on fundraising led by Halsey and Alice North of the North Group. The open clinics allow participants to meet one-on-one with experts in the field. For the open clinic on fundraising, the Norths will meet to listen and give counsel on financial questions.

"Ticket sales are remaining about the same, but we've seen a marked drop in endowments and corporate support. In the open clinic we meet with presenters individually to help them find solutions right for their specific situation," said Halsey North.

As far as getting some fundraising tips from one's



peers, Cathy Weiss, director of the Webb Center in Wickenburg, Arizona, would like to share a funding idea that worked—a partnership with a local dude ranch to host retreats for arts groups. The revenue helps her center and the dude ranch stay in business and the artists on the retreat create original work which the Webb Center then premieres.

The main reason Weiss attends APAP, though, is booking opportunities.

"We're a 600-seat theater in the West, with the nearest theater 600 miles away. Most companies can only travel 350 miles a day, so there is no way we can get excellent productions without working together with other small theaters in the Southwest to bring excellent productions out our way."

With a staff of three, Weiss handles everything from writing press releases to cultivating donors, so it's difficult for Weiss to see new acts anywhere else. The conference offers more than 1,000 showcases, plus the Under the Radar festival featuring more experimental acts. "I don't get out much so I go to as many showcases as I can," Weiss said. "It's my one chance to see what's out there. I'm a presenter in small town. This town depends on us to provide entertainment. I



depend on APAP. It's my time with my people."

Ed Noonan, executive director of the Myrna Loy Center in Helena, Montana, agreed: "We're dependent on the conference for about 60 percent of our booking. With the small size of our theater and its out-of-the-way location, it makes sense for us to find artists at the conference and catch them when they're already traveling our way."

He especially enjoys the Under the Radar festival, which is co-sponsored by APAP and held in off Broadway theaters throughout the city. "I love the mad dash around Manhattan from one show to the other. You see a great variety of acts."

Professional development is another draw of the conference: it's divided along three tracks—artists, audiences, and business.

"I attend all the professional development sessions that I can as well," Weiss said. She might attend "New Borders of Creativity—Transparent Transformation" to keep abreast of the world of artists; "The Arts and the Creative Campus" to learn more about audiences; or "New Frontiers in Technology" on the business end. If one of her board members decides to come along, there is also a special track of sessions such as "Get

The EXPO Hall at the APAP conference includes nearly 400 booths by leaders in the presenting field.

On Board: The Presenting Field in Context" for board members.

Terri Trotter, chief operating officer at the Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas, loves being able to network and reconnect with her peers, another benefit of the APAP conference.

"We don't see each other more than once a year, so it's such a great time to reconnect, see how things are going and hear new ideas," she said. "And this year, NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman will be addressing us [as the keynote speaker], telling us about the challenges in our field. We'll get to hear directly from him. What could be better?"

This year, APAP is presenting a special focus on jazz, a theme recommended by past participants of the conference. This year's conference will celebrate its first partnership with the NEA Jazz Masters program and Jazz at Lincoln Center by launching a new jazz track including sessions with jazz legends and the 2010 NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony and concert.

Sessions such as "Got Jazz: A New Age of Audience Enlightenment" and "Jazz in the 21st Century—America's Expanding Legacy" will be held during the conference; NEA Jazz Masters will participate in some of those sessions. On Monday, conference attendees will be able to meet the 2010 NEA Jazz Masters in a special panel discussion led by A.B. Spellman. Then on Tuesday night, the last night of the conference, the NEA and Jazz at Lincoln Center will host the 2010 NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony and concert. Wynton Marsalis will lead the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, with honorees Annie Ross, Kenny Barron, Yusef Lateef, and Cedar Walton performing as well.

In addition to the conference and all its offerings, John Ellis, managing director of the Diana Wortham Theater in Asheville, North Carolina, reminds his friends that there is much to be learned just by getting out in New York City, the epicenter of performing arts producing. "The first year I did nothing but the conference, but I've learned you have to get out. There's so much going on in the city. People bring a taste and a desire to the table that's impossible to find anywhere else." 



# If You Build It, Will They Come

Building New Audiences for the Arts through Arts Education



BY PAULETTE BEETE

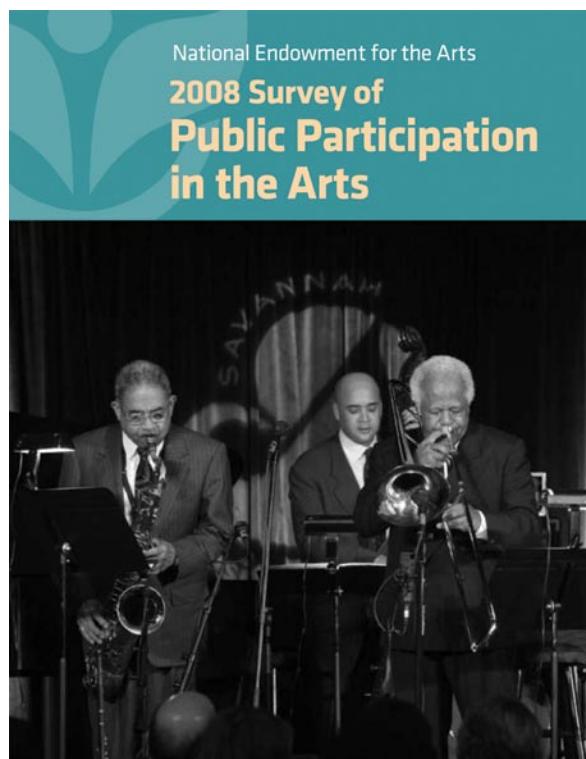
**ACCORDING TO POPULAR WISDOM,** if you build it—or in the case of the arts, perform it—they will come. Or will they? Recent research, including the NEA's own *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, makes it clear that, overall, arts participation in the U.S. appears to be waning. While there are no straight line reasons for this erosion—certainly the down economy has played a factor—one contributing factor to disappearing audiences may be a declining focus on cultural literacy as a component of arts education in the U.S. While many ongoing arts education experiences are aimed at instilling student proficiency and skill in an art form, cultural literacy speaks to a deeper engagement with the art form that allows the student to see and make connections within a particular discipline, between arts disciplines, and between the arts and other subject areas such as the sciences and humanities. In other words, cultural literacy is concerned with the idea that art does not, in fact, exist in a vacuum but is a vital and vibrant part of our everyday lives.

According to Erika Floreska, education director for Jazz at Lincoln Center, a frequent NEA program partner, cultural literacy can be defined as “having the skills and a framework to listen, participate, respond to, and engage with cultural events and experiences that are all around us every day. So understanding that how people interact with each other, how they express themselves, how they express themselves through various forms of art, and how others respond to those expressions are all elements that create American culture, and create the culture in which we live.” The hope in fostering cultural literacy in students is that if they understand the wider world of what goes into making an artwork—not just materials and a skill set, but a particular time in history or economic climate or prevailing set of social mores—they will be able to personally engage with and respond to the artwork in a way that resonates with their own values, history, and daily life. In other words, there’s a world of difference between a student learning how to play “Sum-

“Summertime” on the piano and that same student learning how to play “Summertime” on the piano in context: What was the economic and racial climate in the U.S. when the song first premiered? How did the history of musical theater influence the song’s composition? What’s the historical tradition that influenced George Gershwin as a composer? What traditions have various interpreters from Herbie Hancock to Janis Joplin brought to the song?

According to Floreska, deepening arts engagement also equals deepening person-to-person engagement. As she explained, the arts gives us the ability to “tap into the creativity and the emotional capacity and the human interaction that goes on between people—regardless of whether it’s within an arts context or within a non-arts context. It gives you the tools to communicate with others, to interact with and listen to and respond to others.” Floreska went on to say that through art forms such as jazz, we can also develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for our national history. “Jazz helps tell that story. And [it] tells that story in a way that’s different than reading a history book and being told, ‘This is what happened.’ You can understand and relate to that [history] in a different way when you look at it through jazz, [a way] that supports the human piece of it.”

Clearly an engaged population, one that understands how the arts connects to everyday life, is a population that will show up to be an audience. And as documented in the NEA’s report *The Arts and Civic Engagement*, arts participation seemingly leads to other types of engaged participation—in volunteering, in sports, in the civic life of the community. In addition to supporting cultural literacy programs through Learning in the Arts grants, in 2006, NEA partnered with Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Verizon Foundation to develop NEA Jazz in the Schools (JITS), a web-based companion curriculum that focuses on using jazz as a means to developing cultural literacy. One of the unique aspects of the JITS curriculum that particularly emphasizes the connection between the arts and other disciplines is that the program was developed primarily for use by high school history teachers, not



for music educators (though the curriculum has been used in music, English, film, and other subject areas). According to Floreska, “There are stories of American history and jazz that complement one another in multiple ways of learning. So whether you’re a musician or a non-musician, whether you’re a historian or a jazz person, there are ways to interact with that content and understand both sides of the issue in a deeper way through this engagement.” The five-unit curriculum uses primary and secondary sources—including music and video clips, oral histories, and photographs—to address topics such as the U.S. civil rights movement, the “melting pot” character of American culture, and the effects of technology and urbanization on life in the U.S. Since its launch, it’s estimated that NEA Jazz in the Schools has been studied by nearly 8.4 million students in urban, suburban, and rural school districts nationwide.

An example of how the curriculum’s cultural literacy focus makes unexpected linkages between arts and other subjects is the lesson that equates jazz improvisation with the practice of democracy. Floreska

**[Jazz] tells that story in a way that’s different than reading a history book and being told, ‘This is what happened.’**

explained, “You can also see how jazz evolved to be a personal expression that is very much related to democracy, and how a voice within an ensemble, a solo within an ensemble, relates to an individual voice having to work within a community, to create their democratic voices. That’s all about engagement, and being part of a process. Improvisation is not ‘make up what you want whenever you want and just play while the others play’—it’s a conversation... You’ve got to listen to multiple parts. You have to hear what [the other musicians] are doing and respond to it. You have to articulate your own voice when you’re soloing in a context...and relate it to what all the other musicians are doing. That’s the democracy metaphor, and that’s what makes jazz so relevant and American and complex and human. But so many people never understand that complexity. It’s like, ‘Oh, they’re just making up what they want whenever they want.’”

So if cultural literacy is an important skill for making deep connections with others and with the world around us in general, why isn’t it a core educational value? Surprisingly, one of the barriers to robust arts education programs in schools—including both skills proficiency and cultural literacy programs—is that many currently in school leadership come from the



Jazz can be used to demonstrate the connections between the arts and other subject areas, such as U.S. history.



## BEBOP AND MODERNISM

which promoted a philosophy of nonviolent protest against the Southern system of segregation known as Jim Crow. Equal rights for African Americans had now become a matter of national concern, and the struggle for civil rights was destined to become the defining political movement of its era.

Empowered by this movement, jazz musicians made their own political statements. Charles Mingus's 1957 recording [“Fables of Faubus”](#) (Columbia Track 10) was a biting indictment of Arkansas Governor Orval R. Faubus, who used the National Guard to prevent the integration of Little Rock Central High School by black students. The line “I’m a son of Little Rock Rollin’s 1958 album [“Freedom”](#) (Columbia Track 10) constituted what Rollins calls his own personal emancipation proclamation. And in 1960, Max Roach (who played drums on Rollins’s record) recorded [“We Insist! Freedom Now Suite”](#) (Columbia Track 11), a powerful manifesto that drew on African-American history and literature to express a fervent opposition to both racism in America and colonialism in Africa.

**JAZZ: THE VOICE OF AMERICA**

While the 1950s were a time of bold experiments and unprecedented freedom in the world of jazz, these were also the early years of the Cold War, when the United States became a superpower and anti-Communist paranoia. And yet, paradoxically, the Cold War became a catalyst for the spread of jazz on an unprecedented scale. As the United States began competing with the Soviet Union for influence over nonaligned and developing nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, jazz became a tool and elsewhere a medium of radio because an inexpensive propaganda tool. In 1954, the Voice of America, an overseas broadcasting unit of the United States government, hired a young jazz tenor [“Conover”](#) (Columbia Track 12) to host a program that was broadcast for four hours a night, at a time when no one in America all over the world. Conover played all forms of jazz, even the early avant-garde, like the San Ra Arkestra, that commercial radio stations in the U.S. would not put on the air. Jazz, as Conover used to say, was “the music of freedom,” and the people of Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia, who were listening to jazz at the peak of the Cold War, approximately 20 million of them regularly tuned in to Conover’s show. As many as 70 million more did so in other countries around the world. At a time in which some older forms of jazz were starting to be written off in the U.S. as “easy listening,” Conover’s show was a reminder that jazz was still an exciting and sometimes radical force for change.

Conover’s success on the air encouraged the State Department to send jazz musicians abroad as goodwill ambassadors. The pro-

An excerpt from the Teachers Guide to NEA Jazz in the Schools, which emphasizes using jazz to develop cultural literacy for students.

first generations for which comprehensive arts education was not necessarily part of their early schooling. Unlike generations past, which were expected to have a certain fluency at least in canonical artists, today’s educators suffered from the cuts in arts education that started in the last half of the 20th century. Floreska suggested, “This next phase of leadership in public school education, certainly, are people who have become principals and have gone through the system, many of them without their own arts experience. So not only do you have to now help get the value of arts and cultural learning back on the front page, or part of the regular discussions of education, you then maybe have to train the leaders in education of its value at a personal level because they’ve never experienced that.... So it’s almost two layers of education that are going on. And that will only become more challenging in the next 20 years... You can train as many teachers as you want, but if you don’t get principals and superintendents making decisions to prioritize those classes, it won’t happen.”

Floreska affirmed that arts education is key to rebuilding the arts audience in the U.S. “I think, without a doubt, you invest in arts education—quality arts education—and cultural literacy comes with that, and it will expand audiences and develop audiences for the future.” She also added that the arts community has to be intentional about building and promoting cultural literacy. So will audiences come? If the “it” that’s being built is cultural literacy, they just might. ♫



# The Pulse of Jazz in American History and Culture

BY NAT HENTOFF



PHOTO BY TOM PICH

NEA Jazz Master Nat Hentoff.

**O**N JANUARY 19, 2009, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Rockefeller Foundation presented a concert, Let Freedom Swing: A Celebration of America, at the Kennedy Center in the nation's capital. Heraldng the event, the sponsors declared it "would illustrate that American democracy and America's music share the same tenets and embody the same potential for change, hope, and renewal." Most striking, however, was a quote from Martin Luther King at a 1964 jazz festival in Berlin: Jazz, he said, is America's "triumphant music."

And that reminded me of one of the legal architects of the Supreme Court's triumph over public school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*. On the staff of Thurgood Marshall, who argued that and previous cases, was Charles Black.

Later, in the *Yale Law Journal*, the then constitutional law professor, Charles Black, told of growing up in deeply segregated Texas when, in 1931 at 16, he heard Louis Armstrong at a hotel in Houston: "He was the first genius I had ever seen. It is impossible to overstate the significance of a 16-year-old Southern boy's seeing genius for the first time in a black. We literally never saw a black man then in any but a servant's capacity."

"It was just then," Black continued, "that I started working toward the *Brown* case where I belonged"—with the result that the freedom-resounding trumpet of Louis Armstrong became part of American constitutional history.

**I**T TOOK YEARS before this music—rooted in field hollers (by which slaves communicated across plantations), the gospel music in Holiness Churches, and the blues—broke out of its own segregation: prohibiting public interracial performances by jazz improvisers. But as the music's sounds of surprise and the life force of its rhythms energized the spirits of more and more Americans, Louis Armstrong, in a 1941 letter to jazz critic and historian Leonard Feather, wrote:

"I'd like to recall one of my most inspiring moments. I was playing a concert date in a Miami auditorium; I walked on stage and there I saw something I'd never seen. I saw thousands of people, colored and white, on the main floor. Not segregated in one row of whites and another row of Negroes. Just all together—naturally. I thought I was in the wrong state. When you see things like that, you know you're going forward."

By 2003, Louis was gone but his music, and that of the ever-growing list of jazz masters, had become an international language—evidence of which I saw in October of that year when I was standing in front of Louis' home in Corona, Queens (a borough of New York City). His home had officially become a National Historic Landmark and a New York City Landmark.

As I reported at the time, that block—Louis Armstrong Place—“was jammed with Louis Armstrong’s neighbors and school kids, musicians, and people of all colors, ages, and classes from this country, Germany, Poland, and other lands” reached by Louis and such members of the jazz pantheon as Duke Ellington, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, and many others embodying the essence of the American spirit.

**M**ASTER DRUMMER MAX ROACH once added to my understanding of the continuing thrust of our Constitution. We were talking about what I call the rhythm section of our liberties, the Bill of Rights, and Max said:

“Do you realize that what we do is what the Constitution is all about? In jazz, each of us has individual voices, but we must listen attentively to one another as we play—and out of this whole, comes what we call jazz.”

And in another jazz-and-Constitution interchange, Wynton Marsalis of Jazz at Lincoln Center was talking with former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. The latter revealed she’s a longtime

jazz admirer, going back to when, in college, she heard New Orleans tailgate trombonist Kid Ory.

“One of the beautiful things about jazz improvisation,” Wynton told her, “is that you can take something that we all know, and you can make it into another piece—but it still keeps its identity. It’s how the Constitution can be amended, and it’s still the Constitution, but here’s our take on it. That means it’s always new—because the ideas [in its foundation] are valid, they’re timeless.”

Responded Justice O’Connor: “Well now, if we can just get members of legislative branches to pay a little more attention to the theory of jazz, we’d all be better off, don’t you think?”

**I**T WOULD ALSO BE ENLIGHTENING and invigorating if our schools were to integrate the culture of jazz into the teaching of American history. There’s more that can be done in our schools to generate lifelong understanding of the arts, and also create more artists. And that’s why Quincy Jones is organizing a campaign to bring more music back into the schools, including jazz.

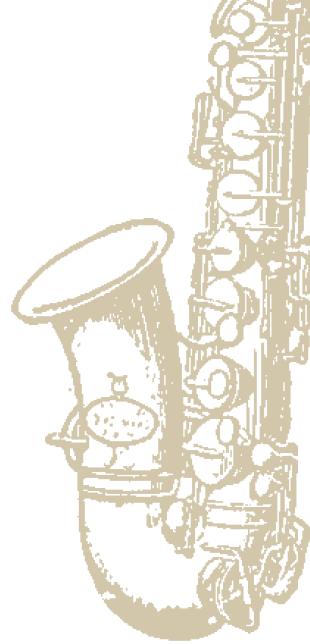
As for more music in the schools, the students are ready. When I brought recordings of classic New Or-



PHOTO BY THEO WARGO, COURTESY OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

Wynton Marsalis and former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor at Let Freedom Swing: A Celebration of America at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

Jazz guitarist Jim Hall, says of his performance in countries around the world: “I can’t talk to most of these musicians in their language, but once we start playing, we have a full common language.”



leans jazz—bands led by clarinetist George Lewis—to a fourth-grade class, the kids starting dancing, and so did this teacher. And historian Peter Gerler, who is very knowledgeable about King Oliver and other New Orleans jazz icons, tells of recently playing with a Dixieland band at a senior center in Boston.

“A group of 25 school kids came for a field trip to visit with the seniors. All I needed was to look at these kids to know they likely had never heard traditional jazz. I had no idea how we might be received. But as soon as we started playing, the kids were up! We were swinging, and the kids rode the crest of that wave—laughing, dancing, making fun. I think that if Q [Quincy Jones] can get the game rolling, he’ll find the dice loaded in his favor.”

**J**AZZ ALSO CREATES this feeling across all kinds of national and other boundary lines. World-class jazz guitarist Jim Hall, a neighbor of mine in New York’s Greenwich Village, says of his performance in countries around the world: “I can’t talk to most of these musicians in their language, but once we start playing, we have a full common language.”

Even during the harshly repressive years in Stalin’s Russia, where jazz was banned, sessions continued. And I once received a note—smuggled out of the Soviet Union—from a tenor saxophonist in Moscow. He had found and read a liner note I’d written for a John Coltrane album, and had been impelled to make copies and send them to fellow jazz players in the Soviet Union in a secret *samizdat*.

For years, American jazz musicians served as State

Department ambassadors to many nations; and since 2005—in collaboration between the State Department and Jazz at Lincoln Center—they’ve been swinging past national and cultural barriers again.

“One band,” reported *The Economist* (April 16, 2009), “went to Mauritania after last year’s coup; many depart for countries that have strained relations with America; the musicians travel to places where some have never seen an American.”

Then there is testimony from jazz trumpeter and educator Jon Faddis. He told me this story about the liberating impact of this born-in-America music not only here but everywhere.

In 1953, Louis Armstrong was scheduled to appear in the Belgian Congo, where a ruthless civil war was underway. When news came of his imminent presence, Jon said, “The factions stopped the war to listen to Louis’s music.”

He added: “We could definitely use Louis Armstrong now.”

Louis’s longtime friend and engineer of the Louis Armstrong Educational Fund, Phoebe Jacobs, often says:

“Don’t let anyone tell you Louis is dead! He’s not!”

And neither will this music die that Martin Luther King celebrated as “triumphant.” ♪

*Nat Hentoff was the first recipient of the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy in 2004. He is a noted critic, journalist, and producer, and writes about music for the Wall Street Journal.*



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The NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony and concert at Jazz at Lincoln Center is being held, for the first time, in tandem with the Association of Performing Arts Presenters annual conference. See stories on NEA Jazz Masters and the APAP conference in this issue of NEA Arts.

APAP Conference  
Hilton New York  
January 8–12, 2010

Meeting the 2010 NEA Jazz Masters Panel  
Hilton New York  
January 11, 2010 at 11 a.m.

NEA Jazz Masters Awards Ceremony and Concert  
Rose Theater, Jazz at Lincoln Center  
January 12, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.



2009 NEA Jazz Master George Benson playing with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra at the awards ceremony.

PHOTO BY TOM PICH