

2024 NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concert

Sat. Apr. 13, 2024 7:30p.m.



 EISENHOWER THEATER

THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS AND
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS PRESENT

2024 NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concert

Honoring Gary Bartz, Terence Blanchard, Willard Jenkins, and Amina Claudine Meyers

Hosted by Felix Contreras of NPR Music's Alt. Latino

With remarks from:

Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD, Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts

Deborah F. Rutter, President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

2024 NEA Jazz Master Gary Bartz

2024 NEA Jazz Master Terence Blanchard

2024 NEA Jazz Master Willard Jenkins

2024 NEA Jazz Master Amina Claudine Myers

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in this venue.

All events and artists subject to change without prior notice.

Meet the 2024 NEA Jazz Masters



Gary Bartz

Gary Bartz has been one of the best purveyors of what he calls “informal composition” (as opposed to improvisation) on alto saxophone since the 1960s, working with such luminaries as Max Roach, Charles Mingus, Art Blakey, and Miles Davis. He has released more than 45 solo albums and appears on more than 200 as a guest artist, as well as working with some of the up-and-coming artists in jazz today, such as Ali Shaheed Muhammad and Adrian Younge for their *Jazz Is Dead* series and the jazz-funk band Maisha.

Bartz was born in Baltimore, Maryland, to nightclub-owning parents and was exposed to many great jazz artists who played at their club. He was six when he was inspired by the sound of Charlie Parker, and received his first alto saxophone at the age of 11. He attended the Juilliard School in New York City in 1958. He joined the Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop from 1962 to 1964, meeting jazz giants Eric Dolphy and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. He also began working with the Max Roach/Abbey Lincoln group in 1964. In 1965, Bartz was recruited into Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers while they played at his parents’ club, taking John Gilmore’s position in the band. He made his recording debut with Blakey on *Soulfinger* that same year. In 1970, Miles Davis asked Bartz to join his band and perform at the historic Isle of Wight Festival and his subsequent tour. Bartz is featured on Davis’ *Live/Evil* recording. Bartz also formed his own group, NTU Troop, named for the Bantu word for “essence.” The group blended soul, funk, African folk music, hard bop, and avant-garde jazz and recorded one of Bartz’s first classics, *I’ve Known Rivers and Other Bodies*, based on the poetry of Langston Hughes. His NTU Troop recordings are often sampled by hip-hop artists. In 1997, he was awarded a Grammy Award[®] for Best Latin Jazz Performance for his work on Roy Hargrove’s *Habana* album, and, in 2005, he received a Grammy Award[®] for his work as a sideman on McCoy Tyner’s recording *Illuminations*. In 2015, Bartz received the BNY Mellon Jazz Living Legacy Award that honors jazz musicians from the mid-Atlantic region who have achieved distinction in performance and education. In 2019, producer Gilles Peterson invited Bartz to play the We Out Here festival with the London-based group Maisha, a move that proved so successful that Bartz played dates with them throughout Europe and cut an album with them in the Netherlands. Since 2001, Bartz has been a professor of saxophone and jazz performance at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio. Bartz focuses his teaching on finding new ways for his students to “open their ears” and presses his Oberlin students to truly hear the music they think they know so well.



Terence Blanchard

Terence Blanchard has been a consistent artistic force for making powerful musical statements for more than 40 years. From his stint with Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers to writing scores for Spike Lee and others, he is unique in the jazz world as an artist whose creative endeavors go far beyond the genre into composing music for television and film, conceiving grand operas, and collaborating with dance companies. For these feats, Blanchard has been recognized with a 2018 United States Artists Fellowship, a 2023 Peabody Medal, and seven Grammy Awards[®].

Blanchard is also a passionate educational mentor, having held positions at the Berklee College of Music, the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, and at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has recently been named the new executive artistic director of SFJAZZ. Blanchard was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. His father, a part-time opera singer, started Blanchard on piano at the age of five and he began learning the trumpet at age eight. At summer camp, he became friends with Wynton and Branford Marsalis and, as a teenager, studied at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts with Roger Dickerson and Ellis Marsalis. At Rutgers University, he studied under jazz saxophonist Paul Jeffrey and trumpeter Bill Fielder, and toured with the Lionel Hampton Orchestra at the age of 19. In 1982, Wynton Marsalis recommended Blanchard to Art Blakey to take Marsalis' place in the Jazz Messengers. Blanchard would eventually become the band's music director. It was in the Jazz Messengers that he met his next collaborator, Donald Harrison, Jr. also from New Orleans. Together, they formed Harrison/Blanchard and released seven well-received albums. While still in Blakey's band, the duo became the first recipients of the Sony Innovators Award. In 1991, Blanchard started his solo career with the release of his self-titled album. The same year he also embarked on a more than 30-year collaboration with Spike Lee, starting as a session musician in *Do the Right Thing* and *Mo' Better Blues*, and scoring his first film, *Jungle Fever*. His work with Lee included both films, such as *Malcolm X*, and documentaries like *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* about the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. His scores for Lee's *BlackKkklansman* and *Da' 5 Bloods* led to two Oscar[®] nominations. In addition to his work with Lee and others, Blanchard has provided music for Broadway plays, dance collaborations, and orchestras. More recently, Blanchard has composed two operas, the most recent of which is *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, based on the memoir of celebrated writer and *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow, with the libretto written by Kasi Lemmons. Commissioned and premiered by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2019, the Metropolitan Opera produced the opera to open their 2021-22 season in New York, making it the first opera composed by an African American composer to premiere at the Met in its entire history. Blanchard continues to perform and record with his band the E-Collective and with the Turtle Island Quartet on the recent recording, *Absence*, a tribute to Wayne Shorter.



Willard Jenkins

Willard Jenkins—recipient of the 2024 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy—has been involved in jazz as a writer, broadcaster, educator, historian, artistic director, and arts consultant since the 1970s and is one of the major voices in promulgating the music and its importance to American culture. Currently the artistic director of the D.C. Jazz Festival, as well as the host of the Ancient/Future program on D.C.'s WPFW radio station (the only jazz station in the nation's capital), Jenkins is an authority on the local as well as national jazz scene.

Jenkins was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, in a household that was overflowing with jazz music. He cultivated his own love of the music first through his father's record collection, then through local jazz radio station WCUY. While at Kent State University earning a BA degree in sociology, Jenkins joined Omega Psi Phi and began writing about jazz for the Black student newspaper and then became a regular contributor to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* after graduating. He subsequently contributed to local, regional, national, and international publications with contributions appearing in *JazzTimes*, *Inside Arts*, *DownBeat*, *Jazz Forum*, and numerous other publications and online sites, as well as providing liner notes for jazz recordings. In 1977, he founded the Northeast Ohio Jazz Society as a concert presenter. From 1979 until 1984, Jenkins taught jazz history at Cleveland State University, and continued his teaching through an online course, *Jazz Imagines Africa*, for Kent State University, which he taught starting in 2005. In 1983, Jenkins conducted a regional needs assessment/research and feasibility study on jazz in the Midwest, which led to the development of the nation's first regional jazz service program at Arts Midwest. He went on to work at Arts Midwest until 1989, publishing the quarterly *Jazzletter*, developing the first regional jazz database, and writing a series of how-to technical assistance booklets for musicians, presenters, educators, and organizations. At Arts Midwest, he also produced the first jazz media conference, which led to development of the Jazz Journalist Association. From 1989 until 1994, Jenkins was executive director of the National Jazz Service Organization in Washington, D.C. In 1990, he was an architect of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest National Jazz Network, which received an initial funding allocation of \$3.4 million to develop a network of presenting organizations and regional arts organizations. Over the arc of his career, Jenkins has also served as 18-year artistic director of Tri-C JazzFest, BeanTown Jazz Festival, Tribeca Performing Arts Center, and as artistic consultant to the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival, 651 Arts, Harlem Stage/Aaron Davis, and the Smithsonian Institution. He also conducted in-depth oral history interviews for the Smithsonian Institution, the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, and Weeksville Heritage Center. In addition to WPFW, Jenkins has served as program host and producer at WWOZ in New Orleans, KFAI in Minneapolis, and BET Jazz. In 2010, he worked with Randy Weston on his highly praised as-told-to autobiography, arranging the material in the book. He writes and edits a blog, *The Independent Ear*, on his website openskyjazz.com and recently used a collection of interviews he conducted on the blog with Black music critics for his new book, *Ain't But a Few of Us: Black Music Writers Tell Their Story*, that was released in late 2022. He also produces and hosts a biweekly online jazz trivia contest called *Jazzology* for the website *Savage Content*, for whom he wrote a 13-episode biographical podcast on Billie Holiday, *No Regrets*.



Amina Claudine Myers

From her early beginnings as a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Amina Claudine Myers has gained acclaim as a skilled composer for voice and instruments, often displaying her gospel influences. Her move to New York City in the 1970s led her to prioritize her compositional work and to take on theatrical production projects.

Myers was born in Blackwell, Arkansas, and was brought up primarily by her great aunt and her great uncle. She started taking piano lessons at the age of six and, when she was seven, her family moved to a Black community in Dallas, Texas, where Myers continued her lessons. The family moved back to Blackwell in 1957 and, soon after, Myers formed a gospel group that toured the local circuit. The recipient of several college scholarships, she majored in music education at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas. During this time, she played in the music department jazz band, became student director for the choir, and taught herself to play the organ. After graduation, Myers moved to Chicago, where she taught music at an elementary school for six years. She became a member of AACM in 1966 and was one of the performers at the AACM's second concert. In the late 1960s, she added "Amina" to her name. As an AACM member, Myers started composing for voice and instruments. Her original compositions incorporated traditional influences, including blues, gospel, and jazz. In 1975, she organized her first voice choir for her musical called *I Dream*, which was first presented in Chicago. After moving to New York City, she premiered her work "Improvisational Suite for Chorus, Pipe Organ and Percussion" (with an ensemble of nineteen: sixteen voices, two percussionists, and Myers on pipe organ) at St. Peter's Lutheran Church and "When the Berries Fell," consisting of eight voices, electric organ, piano, and two percussionists, at Manhattan Community College. In New York, she wrote for theater, composing music for a number of Off-Broadway productions and even acting in some. She was the assistant musical director for *Ain't Misbehavin'* prior to its Broadway production. She expanded her palette and has created works for dance and for chamber orchestra and chorus as well as works in collaboration with the Chinese composer and vocalist Sola Lui. She has also continued working in the jazz realm, recording and performing with many great jazz artists, including notable tours with Lester Bowie, Charlie Haden's Liberation Orchestra, and Archie Shepp. She has performed throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and North America, and also held residencies and conducted workshops at colleges and universities nationally and internationally. Myers has received many grants and awards, including the 2021 Living Legacy Award from Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Meet the Composer, and New York Foundation for the Arts. She was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in 2001 and the Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame in 2010. She resides and teaches privately in New York City.

Meet the Performers

HONORING WILLARD JENKINS

African Rhythms Alumni Quintet

It's hard to believe in two years, we will witness the centennial of an astounding jazz pianist and composer, Dr. Randy Weston, who fortunately received tremendous accolades, awards, and acknowledgements before his transition to the world of our ancestors in 2018 at the age of 92! His band affectionately known as "African Rhythms" recorded, performed, and toured around the world in the dissemination of his musical philosophy regarding the greatness of the African aesthetic found within the worldwide musical landscape.

A multitude of publications have attested to his greatness as a jazz pianist and composer, including *African Rhythms—The Autobiography of Randy Weston* composed by Randy Weston and arranged by Willard Jenkins (NEA Jazz Master Class of 2024); *Africa Speaks, America Answers—Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times* by Robin D.G. Kelley; *Notes and Tones* by legendary jazz drummer Art Taylor.

In addition, many of Dr. Weston's compositions are jazz standards: *Hi Fly*, *Babe's Blues*, *Little Niles*, *Pretty Strange*, *Congolese Children*, *Saucer Eyes*, and have been recorded by a host of jazz luminaries. His African Rhythms group recordings culminated in 2016 with *The African Nubian Suite* of which T.K. Blue is the associate producer. This monumental recording features many members of his distinguished ensembles, including three main components that make up the African Rhythms Alumni Quintet, and they share a long and treasured history of bringing Dr. Weston's music to fruition.



Thurman Barker

Thurman Barker is a celebrated percussionist who built his career on innovation. As a professional musician, composer, and college professor, he brings endless passion and decades of experience together to entertain, educate, and expand the horizons of his art. His career has spanned decades, and his talent encompasses and crosses over into many musical genres. From jazz and blues to contemporary, classical, and beyond, his sound blurs traditionally rigid lines to the delight of his audiences.

Since creating Uptee Records in the early 80s, Barker has previously released six recordings as a leader. In 2016, Barker began writing for Chamber Orchestra. His first score entitled *South Side Suite* premiered at Bard College in the Fall 2017 and had its New York premiere at Roulette in 2019. Barker's second score *Pandemic Fever* had its premiere at DePaul University in Chicago on October 1, 2021. His most recent score entitled *Mr. Speed-Str.* premiered in the Fall of 2022 at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music in NYC. Barker's wealth of knowledge was built through his association with countless incredible collaborators. Most notable musical experiences have been with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). As a charter member of the group, Barker first appeared in AACM productions with Joseph Jarman's pioneering ensembles. He then went on to record and play with many members, including Dr. Muhal Richard Abrams, Amina Claudine Meyers, Anthony Braxton, Leroy Jenkins, Roscoe Mitchell, and Henry Threadgill. After moving to New York in the late 70s, Barker worked and recorded with Sam Rivers and Cecil Taylor. Thurman Barker became a Professor Emeritus of Bard College in Music/Jazz Studies in June 2021. He is a recipient of a 2022 NYSCA award for composition as well as numerous Meet the Composer grants.



Lakecia Benjamin

Lakecia Benjamin is a three-time Grammy[®]-nominated New York-based saxophonist, arranger, composer, and educator. Her music offers a unique meld of R&B, several strains of jazz, and funk. Her warm, resonant tone—that has been compared to Johnny Griffin’s—lends itself to any form of music she chooses to play. In addition to honing her chops early with Clark Terry and later Terri Lyne Carrington, she is also a noted accompanist for vocalists—among them Gregory Porter and Theo Crocker.

Retox, her 2012 leader debut, offered a beat-conscious set of soul and funk covers and originals produced by Ben Kane. Benjamin played on “Right on Brotha,” the closing track from Robert Glasper’s *Everything’s Beautiful* in 2018, a collection of reimagined Miles Davis tracks. Her sophomore date, *Rise Up for Ropeadope*, contained a Prince-inspired series of original jazz-funk jams. In 2020, she released *Pursuance: The Coltranes*. The widely acclaimed set contained six tunes each by Alice and John Coltrane, with Benjamin leading a large cast that included former Coltrane sideman Reggie Workman. In 2023, she returned with the star-studded *Phoenix*. Produced by Carrington, it wed jazz, funky soul, R&B, and hip-hop with an all-star cast. The album brought upon three Grammy[®]-nominations and universal praise.

Benjamin was born in New York City and raised in Manhattan’s predominantly Dominican Washington Heights neighborhood. She played recorder in grade school and junior high where she also began writing songs and lyrics. She won admission to the Fiorello LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts. It was there she began playing saxophone in earnest. She picked it up quickly and after graduating joined the renowned jazz program at New York’s New School University. At New School, she studied with jazz veterans including Billy Harper, Workman, Buster Williams, and Gary Bartz. Bartz proved an important mentor. He introduced her to training technical exercise techniques while facilitating her interest in the music of jazz saxophonists including Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, and Jackie McLean. She also played in and performed with Clark Terry’s Young Titans of Jazz, and some of Workman’s ensembles. While struggling to make ends meet, she won paying gigs with Missy Elliott and Alicia Keys, widening her approach. These influences made their presence known on Benjamin’s Motema leader debut, *Retox*, in 2010. The unusual set included Benjamin’s Soul Squad band backing a number of singers and rappers in a host of originals and covers, some of which didn’t feature her horn at all. She explained in an interview that she didn’t want to be heard as merely an instrumentalist and soloist, but as an arranger and bandleader, too. She also won opportunities to play and tour with a wide array of artists including former Coltrane drummer Rashied Ali, the David Murray Big Band, vocalist Vanessa Rubin, and guitarist James Blood Ulmer. Her deep jazz roots and reputation for hard yet innovative work made her a first-call sidewoman, arranger, and horn section leader, and she landed a touring gig with Anita Baker. In 2015, she was part of the star-studded cast that played on vocalist and arranger Charenee Wade’s *Offering: The Music of Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson*. In addition to Benjamin, some of its other participants included Marcus Miller, Christian McBride, Malcolm Jamal-Warner, and Lonnie Plaxico. The following year, she was invited by pianist Robert Glasper to participate in the sessions for his Miles Davis tribute, *Everything’s Beautiful*; she appeared with Stevie Wonder and DJ Spinna on the set’s closing track, “Right on Brotha.” In 2018, Benjamin issued her Ropeadope debut album, *Rise Up*, leading a large ensemble in a savvy jazz-funk update for the 21st century that included not only players but singers and rappers. In the aftermath, she played dates in and around New York, joined Porter’s road band, worked with Carrington, and was a featured musician and arranger for comedy star Craig Robinson. In addition to performing, Benjamin also became an educator, teaching at Jazz at Lincoln Center and at Jazz House Kids. Benjamin turned heads with her third album — and second from Ropeadope — by leaving R&B and funk by the wayside. May 2020’s *Pursuance: The Coltranes* is unlike any other tribute project. Its 13 tunes were equally divided between compositions by Alice and John and offered sometimes radical reinterpretations. The outlier was “Going Home.” Composed by Benjamin, its lineup included bass clarinetist Marcus Strickland and string group Rootstock Republic. In addition to Benjamin’s alto were the selectively featured horns of Bartz, Steve Wilson, Greg Osby, and Bruce Williams, harpist Brandee Younger, violinist Regina Carter, bassists Workman, Plaxico, and Me’Shell Ndegéocello, and vocalists Dee Dee Bridgewater, Jazzmeia Horn, Zakiyyah Modeste, and Dudley Perkins. The set was greeted with global acclaim by critics upon release, and subsequently charted at streaming. In January 2023, Benjamin released *Phoenix* on Whirlwind Recordings. The 12-track, mostly original set was performed by her septet and produced by Terri Lyne Carrington. *Phoenix* featured many guests including Dianne Reeves, Georgia Ann Muldrow, Patrice Rushen, Wayne Shorter, Wallace Roney, Sonia Sanchez, and Angela Davis.

HONORING WILLARD JENKINS



Alex Blake

Hailing from Panama and having first played with Randy Weston 40+ years ago, Alex Blake is a bass prodigy and has been hired by a multitude of Jazz royalty: Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Pharoah Sanders, Danilo Perez, Billy Cobham, as well as the vocal Jazz group, Manhattan Transfer.



HONORING WILLARD JENKINS

T.K. Blue

Sax, flute, kalimba, a member of African Rhythms for 38 years, and Dr. Weston's musical director for 27 years, T.K. Blue also arranged two of Randy's latter works: *Ancient Future* featuring NEA Jazz Master Regina Carter at Lincoln Center 2002 and *The James Reese Europe Suite*, last performed at the Kennedy Center in 2017. Blue has also graced the bandstands of additional NEA Jazz Masters: Vocalist Jimmy Scott and South African Pianist Abdullah Ibrahim. Blue's CD *The Rhythms Continue* by JAJA Records in 2019 features members of African Rhythms in dedication to a giant on whose shoulders we stand!



HONORING GARY BARTZ

Paul Bollenback

Paul Bollenback started his career in music in 1981, and has performed as a sideman with a wide range of jazz luminaries, including artists as diverse as Stanley Turrentine, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Steve Gadd, Gary Bartz, David "Fathead" Newman, Terri-Lyne Carrington, Joe Locke, Jack McDuff, James Moody, Jim Snidero, Charlie Byrd, Herb Ellis, Paul Bley, Geoffrey Keezer, Mike LeDonne, Carol Sloane, Gary Thomas, Grady Tate, and in the group East Meets Jazz with the renowned tabla virtuoso Sandip Burman, to name a few.

He is known for his versatility, and also for an influential 20 year stint with jazz organist Joey DeFrancesco. Bollenback performs on over 80 recordings as a sideman, and has released 8 CD's as a leader. A busy performance schedule has been augmented since the late 90s by steady jazz education duties at Columbia University, Queens College, and The New School. Bollenback is also a composer, whose pieces have appeared on Joey DeFrancesco's "Reboppin'" and on the "Jazz Times Superband" CD. His most recent recording, "Portraits in Space and Time" (Mayimba Music), with his trio, was released in 2014. Paul Bollenback resides in the New York City area.



HONORING GARY BARTZ

Marc Cary

In a jazz world brimming with brilliant and adventurous pianists, Marc Cary stands apart by way of pedigree and design. None of his prestigious peer group ever set the groove behind the drums in Washington D.C. go-go bands nor are any others graduates of both Betty Carter and Abbey Lincoln's daunting bandstand academies. Cary remains one of the progenitors of contemporary jazz, evident in his influence on peers.

Live gigs with vibraphonist Stefon Harris and bandmate Casey Benjamin began the genesis of Robert Glasper's recording Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," and Cary's record "Taiwa" from *Focus* in 2006 evolved into "For You" on Glasper's *Double Booked* and Harris' *Urbanus*. Cary collaborator Roy Hargrove exalted him with "Caryisms" on 1992's *The Vibe*, an album whose title track is one of two Cary originals including "Running Out of Time"—now part of the lexicon of live repertoire among jazz stalwarts Hargrove, Dr. Lonnie Smith and Igmar Thomas' Revive Big Band. As New York Times jazz critic Nate Chinen observed recently, "There isn't much in the modern-jazz-musician tool kit that Marc Cary hasn't mastered, but he has a particular subspecialty in the area of groove...with a range of rhythmic strategies, from a deep-house pulse to a swinging churn." Mr. Cary richly embodies the spirit of diverse streams that feed into the ample body of what we consider jazz history today.



HONORING WILLARD JENKINS

Chief Baba Neil Clarke

Chief Baba Neil Clarke is an African Percussionist, a member of African Rhythms for 33 years, an integral member of his esteemed trio, and a deeply spiritual musician steeped in the Yoruba religion found in West Africa. He has graced the stages with bands under Pharoah Sanders, Noel Pointer, Al Jarreau/David Sanborn, Harry Belafonte, Letta Mbulu, Spirit Ensemble, and he leads a band in tribute to the Cuban master percussionist, Mongo Santamaria!

HONORING TERENCE BLANCHARD

E-Collective

Featuring Charles Altura (Guitar), Taylor Eigsti (Piano, Keyboard, Synths), David Ginyard, Jr. (Electric Bass), and Jaylen Petinaud (Drums), Terence Blanchard's E-Collective began developing nearly two decades ago when he was recording the score for Spike Lee's *Inside Man*. The orchestral score included a good deal of groove-based music, and he recruited drummer Oscar "Seatpocket" Seaton for the soundtrack.

A first-call Los Angeles studio player who has worked extensively with fellow Chicago native Ramsey Lewis for several decades, appeared on hundreds of albums, and toured with Lionel Richie, David Sanborn, George Benson, Yolanda Adams, and Dianne Reeves, Seaton encouraged Blanchard to pursue a plugged-in project. The E-Collective's first album, *Breathless* (Blue Note Records), serves as a politically charged collection of compositions inspired partly by the BLM movement. In many ways, the band is very much a work in progress with a growing book connected to Blanchard's brilliant body of compositions for acoustic settings. "It's still unfolding for me," Blanchard says. "I don't approach it thinking that I have to write for an electric band. I just write it and we'll make it funky. Literally, the only thing that has changed is the rhythmic style."

CELEBRATING DUKE ELLINGTON & CLASS OF 2024 NEA JAZZ MASTERS

Katie Ernst



Katie Ernst is described by the Chicago Tribune as "a versatile young bassist who plays in far-flung bands and sings with uncommon delicacy and authenticity." She is co-leader of the adventurous Chicago-based jazz trio Twin Talk, folk-jazz duo Wayfaring, indie folk duo Edith Judith, and has received widespread acclaim for her Dorothy Parker poetry song cycle *Little Words*, which premiered at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Recent performances and recognitions include receiving a 2022 composing residency at the Ragdale Foundation; performing in Mexico City, MX for a Chicago/CDMX Improvised Music Exchange in 2020; performances at the Hyde Park Jazz Festival and Chicago Jazz Festival; performing with MacArthur Fellow pianist/composer Jason Moran at the Chicago Symphony Center and the Kennedy Center; representing the USA as bassist and vocalist for the 2018 EuroRadio Jazz Orchestra in Riga, Latvia; and being named a Luminarts Fellow in Jazz in 2013. Ernst is an active side woman in the jazz and improvised music communities of Chicago, regularly performing with Alvin Cobb Jr. Trio, Gustavo Cortiñas' Kind Regards, as well as projects led by saxophonist Sarah Clausen, and drummer Ted Sirota. She is a teaching artist for the Jazz Institute of Chicago's Jazz Masters Residency Program in Chicago Public Schools, and is a faculty member at Birch Creek Music Academy for the Jazz I summer program in Door County, WI. She travels throughout the U.S. as a guest artist/clinician for young musicians. She earned a degree in jazz studies from the Eastman School of Music in 2011 and is Betty Carter Jazz Ahead alum (2013, 2014). More info at katieernst.com.

HONORING WILLARD JENKINS, CELEBRATING DUKE ELLINGTON & CLASS OF 2024 NEA JAZZ MASTERS

Camille Gainer



Camille Gainer, a native New Yorker, has established herself with a rich career poised with artistic ability and versatility. She began playing drums and other instruments such as guitar, violin, and piano at the age of 11. She then went on to study with master drummer Michael Carvin. Her diligence and perseverance earned her a full scholarship at Brooklyn's Long Island University, where she got to study with other greats like Keith Copeland.

Gainer has gone on to work with such luminous artist as Roy Ayers, Lonnie Liston Smith, Roberta Flack, Jean Carn, Noel Pointer, Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, Chuck Mangione, Marc Cary, Christian McBride, Michael Urbaniak, Ursula Dudziak, Melky Sedeck, Worl-a-Girl, Capelton, Lt.Stitchie, Tanya Stephens, Sugar Minott, M.C. Shan and the Juice Crew All-Stars of which she was the musical Director, Monifa, Heavy D, Angela Bofill, Weldon Irvine, Joan Jett, Onaje Allen Gumbs, Leni Stern, Kelis, J.T. Taylor, Les Nubians, Cyndi Lauper, Alicia Keys, Vernon Reid, Nona Hendryx, Rhonda Ross, Diana Ross, Wayne Brady, and Kandace Springs.



Jerome Harris

Jerome Harris's major professional performing experience began in 1978 as bass guitarist with jazz icon Sonny Rollins (1983 NEA Jazz Master); from 1988 to 1994 he played guitar with Rollins. Harris has performed on six continents, working with Jack DeJohnette (2012 NEA Jazz Master), David Krakauer, Bill Frisell, Paul Motian, Leni Stern, Martha Redbone, Ray Anderson, Julius Hemphill, Amina Claudine Myers, Ned Rothenberg, Oliver Lake, and many others.

Jerome Harris appears on over sixty recordings; his formative musical experiences include blues, folk, gospel, and a range of other American music genres. He has taught at Hampshire College, William Paterson University, Lehman College (City University of New York), and the 2021 and 2022 Alternative Guitar Summit Camps. Harris's published essays include "Considering Jaki Byard" (*Sound American* SA22; New York: Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc., 2019), and "Jazz on the Global Stage" (*The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*; edited by Ingrid Monson; New York: Garland/Taylor & Francis, 2000). He studied at Harvard College (A.B. 1973, Social Relations) and New England Conservatory of Music (B.M. with honors, 1977, Jazz Guitar).

HONORING GARY BARTZ



James King

For the past 40-plus years, local musician James King, Jr. has been laying a solid foundation for musicians around the world. His mastery of the upright bass displays confidence and ebullience. King is a bender of notes and ideas. His resonate tone puts the meat on the musical bones of a composition. Born in Houston Texas, King has made the Washington D.C. area his musical home for the last 30 years.

Working with both local and national acts such as Stanley Turrentine, Gary Bartz, Buck Hill, Shirley Horn, John Malachi, Sharon Clark, Max Roach, Sonny Fortune, Harold Mabern, Gary Thomas, Geri Allen, Ronnie Mathews, Ronnie Burrage, John Hicks, James Williams, Jon Hendricks, Junior Cook, James Moody, Pharoah Sanders, Eddie Henderson, Steve Williams, Barry Harris, Rueben Brown, Dick Morgan, Freddy Cole, George V Johnson Jr, to name a few. James King is a very gifted composer with a lyrical bass style and one of the most sort after bassist in the Metropolitan area. He can be found at one of the many National and International Jazz festivals that keep on the forefront of the Jazz scene.

HONORING WILLARD JENKINS



Ku-umba Frank Lacy

Ku-umba Frank Lacy took over the trombone chair in African Rhythms when our dear mentor Benny Powell transitioned in 2010, and his first concert was in Monte Carlo. Lacy has also performed with a long list of giants like McCoy Tyner, Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers, Bobby Watson, The Mingus Dynasty, and a host of others.

HONORING GARY BARTZ



Kassa Overall

Kassa Overall is a Grammy[®]-nominated musician, emcee, singer, producer, and drummer who melds avant-garde experimentation with hip hop production techniques to tilt the nexus of jazz and rap in unmapped directions, reflecting a panoramic musical background from West Coast G-funk to the sounds of the New York underground.

In the past two years, Overall has released four critically acclaimed projects: *I THINK I'M GOOD* (on Gilles Peterson's Brownswood Recordings imprint), *Go Get Ice Cream and Listen to Jazz*, *SHADES OF FLU*, and *SHADES OF FLU 2*, gathering support from artistic visionaries including Virgil Abloh and Thom Yorke. Whatever the experiment, Overall remains faithful to the pocket of jazz drums in the tradition of his mentors, Elvin Jones, Billy Higgins, and Billy Hart, with whom he studied at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Overall has been working at the forefront of New York City's jazz scene for two decades, touring and recording with artists as varied as Geri Allen, Steve Coleman, Francis and the Lights, Yoko Ono, Peter Evans, Carmen Lundy, Terri Lyne Carrington, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Theo Croker, and Gary Bartz. As a modern musical polymath, his credits range from featured artist to drummer, producer, and composer.



Sharp Radway

Sharp Radway is the perfect protege for Dr. Weston. Although Radway was never a member of African Rhythms, he was quite close with Dr. Weston and spent considerable time in his presence. Sharp has completely absorbed Weston's music and pianistic underpinnings. He has internalized Dr. Weston's sound and chord structures as well as his music. Plus, like Dr. Weston, Radway retains an immense spiritual nature when performing. Radway has enhanced the bands of NEA Jazz Masters Benny Golson and Louis Hayes, as well as Nicholas Payton, Steve Turre, Nnenna Freelon, and a multitude of jazz giants. He is also the author of *Musicianship 101 (What They Don't Tell You In School)*.

CELEBRATING DUKE ELLINGTON & CLASS OF 2024 NEA JAZZ MASTERS



REDWOOD

A musician, producer, composer, and recording artist, REDWOOD was born Sequoia Snyder in Washington D.C. but spent her early childhood in Fort Myers, Florida. She was heavily influenced by gospel, R&B, hip-hop, funk, soul, and pop music while growing up. Upon returning to D.C. at ten years old, she began singing and eventually entered the prestigious Duke Ellington School of the Arts as a vocal major.

But she became enamored with the piano as a freshman and changed her major, swiftly becoming an accomplished performer and leader. REDWOOD earned tremendous opportunities at Ellington, including performances with legendary artists like Herbie Hancock, Terence Blanchard, Terell Stafford, and DeeDee Bridgewater. A 2021 graduate of the Jazz Studies program at Michigan State University, REDWOOD has been mentored by esteemed musicians like Rodney Whitaker, Jason Moran, Etienne Charles, and Diego Rivera, blending contemporary jazz and other Black genres with sophisticated individuality. In 2022, she performed with international Afrobeat star CKay in New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and The Roots Picnic in Philadelphia. She also performed with Teri Lynne Carrington, Patrice Rushen, and Jazzmeia Horn, as a Geri Allen Gathering Orchestra Fellow, and appeared with the New York City Ballet. REDWOOD's multimedia piece on Black joy, *Delight*, won the Most Inspiring Performance Art Award at MSU's 2021 Social Justice Festival. She won the Outstanding Piano award at the Lincoln Center's Jack Rudin Jazz Competition in 2020, and later performed alongside Kenny Barron and Cory Henry at NPR's annual *A Jazz Piano Christmas* program. Her musical endeavors in 2019 included selection for the Kennedy Center's Betty Carter Jazz Ahead residency; JAS Aspen Snowmass Academy (directed by Christian McBride); and DeeDee Bridgewater's pilot program for emerging women musicians, The Woodshed Network. She was recently featured nationally by PBS as a protege of jazz legend Jason Moran (2023). Neither REDWOOD nor her music fits neatly into conventional boxes. Her originality shines through in her 2019 EP *Sempervirens*. Already distinguished as a musician, she went beyond the keys in her debut album, *Red 2 Go*, showcasing her vocal and production abilities. The eight-track mini-project received praise in publications such as Earmilk, Stereofox, and NUNAR magazine. Recent singles include the bouncy "Dub," with rising vocalist Ekep Nkwelle, and "Nana," a jazz tribute to her great-grandmother. At just 24 years old, REDWOOD has covered remarkable ground in a short period of time, with plans to go much farther.

CELEBRATING DUKE ELLINGTON & CLASS OF 2024 NEA JAZZ MASTERS



Charenée Wade

First Runner-Up in the 2010 Thelonious Monk Vocal Competition, the award-winning and critically acclaimed vocalist, arranger, educator, and composer from New York City has excited audiences all over the world with her ingenuity and vibrancy through her artistry. Recipient of the 2017 Jazz at Lincoln Center Millennial Swing Award, Wade has worked with notable artists including Wynton Marsalis, Terri Lyne Carrington, Christian McBride, Winard Harper, Eric Reed, Jacky Terrason, Curtis Lundy, Robert Glasper, and Kyle Abraham (MacArthur Genius Awardee).

Wade's current CD, *Offering: The Music of Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson*, is a powerful re-interpretation of the poet's musical library, which features notable artists including Lonnie Plaxico, Marcus Miller, Stefon Harris, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, and Christian McBride (spoken word). An alumni of Manhattan School of Music and Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, Wade has performed at some of the top venues including Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Jazz Standard, The Apollo, and has performed at major festivals worldwide including Montreux, the Copenhagen Jazz Festival, Istanbul Jazz Festival, Spoleto, Savannah Music, Jazz En Tete, Bern Jazz Festival, and Charlie Parker Jazz Festival. As an educator, Wade has taught masterclasses, clinics, and jazz camps in the U.S. and all over the world, is currently an instructor at Aaron Copland School, Peabody Institute of John Hopkins University, and The Juilliard School.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

From its earliest days, the National Endowment for the Arts has funded countless jazz organizations across the country, making significant investments in support of jazz concerts, festivals, education activities, and other programs. Initiated in 1982, the NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship is the nation’s highest honor given to musicians who have reached an exceptionally high standard of achievement in jazz, an art form uniquely rooted in American history and culture. In 2004, a new award was created for those individuals who helped to advance the appreciation of jazz, the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy. With the 2024 class, the NEA has awarded 173 fellowships to great figures in jazz.

The NEA Jazz Masters Fellowships are awarded to living individuals on the basis of nominations from the public including members of the jazz community. NEA Jazz Masters Fellowships are up to \$25,000 and can be received once in a lifetime.

Visit arts.gov/honors/jazz for photos and bios for all of the NEA Jazz Masters, archived concerts, video tributes, podcasts, more than 350 NEA Jazz Moments audio clips, and information on how to make a nomination.

The National Endowment for the Arts acknowledges the support of BMI® in sponsoring the 2024 NEA Jazz Masters Awards Dinner.

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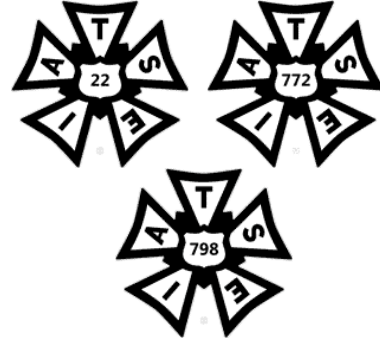
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