



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

A great nation
deserves great art.

The Nancy Hanks Center
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20506-0001
202/682-5400
www.arts.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 3, 2008

Contact: Liz Stark. (Media Inquiries)
202-682-5744, starke@arts.gov

Katja von Schuttenbach (Program Inquiries)
202-682-5711, vonschuttenbach@arts.gov

National Endowment for the Arts Announces the 2009 NEA Jazz Masters

*NEA Partners with Jazz at Lincoln Center for NEA Jazz Masters
Awards Ceremony and Concert*

Washington, DC – The National Endowment for the Arts today announced the recipients of the 2009 NEA Jazz Masters Award—the nation’s highest honor in this distinctly American music. The six recipients will each receive a \$25,000 grant award, and will be publicly honored in an awards ceremony and concert on Friday, October 17, 2008.

The six 2009 NEA Jazz Masters are: George Benson (vocalist and solo instrumentalist, guitar), James “Jimmy” Cobb (rhythm instrumentalist, drums), Lee Konitz (solo instrumentalist, saxophone), Toots Thielemans (solo instrumentalist, harmonica and guitar), and Snooky Young (solo instrumentalist, trumpet). Recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder will receive the 2009 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy.

For the October presentation, the Arts Endowment will partner with Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. The awards ceremony and concert at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, will feature the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis in a program dedicated to the honorees’ works. Past collaborations between the NEA and Jazz at Lincoln Center include the NEA Jazz in the Schools curriculum—available free of charge to high school teachers nationwide—and the media announcement event for the 2008 NEA Jazz Masters class.

“Jazz is a vital part of our nation’s history and cultural heritage,” said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia, “and I am delighted to announce the artists of the class of 2009, whose bodies of work have had, and continue to have, a decisive and enduring impact on the development of this art form.”

Each member of the 2009 class fulfilled the selection criteria of being a distinguished artist whose excellence, impact, and significant contributions have helped to keep the important tradition of jazz alive:

- A winner of ten Grammy Awards, **George Benson** created the innovative practice of playing a florid guitar melody accompanied by an identical, scatted vocal line.
- An accomplished soloist and outstanding accompanist, jazz drummer **James “Jimmy” Cobb** has worked with such renowned musicians as Billie Holiday, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, and Sarah Vaughan.
- A pioneer of “cool jazz,” saxophonist **Lee Konitz** was part of Miles Davis’s famous nonet performances and recordings in the 1940s, before working with Lennie Tristano and Stan Kenton and eventually emerging as a highly acclaimed band leader.
- **Toots Thielemans** has been credited with bringing the harmonica to jazz. The mastery of his instrument is evident in his performances with Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Quincy Jones, Billy Joel, and Paquito D’Rivera.
- Arguably the greatest recording engineer in jazz history, **Rudy Van Gelder**’s crystal-clear recordings have defined the sound associated with the legendary Blue Note record label since the early 1950s.
- A master of the plunger mute, **Snooky Young**’s distinctive sound made him the trumpeter of choice for the great jazz big band leaders Count Basie, Jimmie Lunceford, and Lionel Hampton, among others. He is currently a member of The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra.

Profiles and downloadable high resolution photos of the 2009 NEA Jazz Masters can be found on the NEA’s Web site: <http://www.arts.gov/national/jazz/jazz09/index.html>

Each year since 1982, the Arts Endowment has conferred the NEA Jazz Masters Award on a handful of living legends who have made major contributions to jazz. With this new class, the award has been given to 106 great figures in American music. Other NEA Jazz Masters include Count Basie, Art Blakey, Dave Brubeck, Betty Carter, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, Roy Eldridge, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Herbie Hancock, Elvin Jones, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Cecil Taylor, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson, and Teddy Wilson.

About NEA Jazz Masters: NEA Jazz Masters are selected from nominations submitted by the public. Musicians selected as NEA Jazz Masters receive a one-time grant award of \$25,000, are honored at a public awards ceremony, and may be offered opportunities for participation in NEA-sponsored promotional, performance, and educational activities under the NEA Jazz Masters National Initiative program. Only living musicians or jazz advocates may receive the NEA Jazz Masters honor.

The National Endowment for the Arts has supported jazz artists and organizations since 1969, providing millions of dollars in grants and awards. In 2004, the NEA significantly expanded its NEA Jazz Masters program and in 2005 created the NEA Jazz Masters Initiative, a comprehensive program of jazz support that includes the NEA Jazz Masters Award; NEA Jazz Masters Live, a series of multiple event engagements in selected communities, featuring NEA Jazz Masters; radio programming featuring NEA Jazz Masters; a compilation CD produced by Verve Music Group; educational resources through the NEA Jazz in the Schools program produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center; and publications and reports. For

more information on NEA Jazz Masters, the public is invited to visit the web site, at www.neajazzmasters.org.

About Jazz at Lincoln Center: Jazz at Lincoln Center is dedicated to inspiring and growing audiences for jazz. With the world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances a unique vision for the continued development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of performance, education and broadcast events for audiences of all ages. These productions include concerts, national and international tours, residencies, hall of fame induction ceremony, weekly national radio and television programs, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, jazz appreciation curriculum for students, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, adult education courses, student and educator workshops and interactive websites. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis Jazz at Lincoln Center will produce nearly 3,000 events during its 2008-09 Season in its home in New York City, Frederick P. Rose Hall, and around the world. Please visit our website at www.jalc.org.

###