

Are You the Next Mary Lou Williams FAQ

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Why Mary Lou Williams? We asked Jazz at Lincoln Center Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis the same question. This is what he said.

W.M. I think Mary Lou Williams has a very important body of work, her playing and her arranging, and I think the fact that she is a woman is important. It's important for our female students to hear Mary Lou's music and understand the level of virtuosity and sophistication that she gave to jazz in the late '20s and '30s and '40s, until she passed away in 1981. She was creative until the end; until the 1970's she was constantly creative.

[Her music teaches students] how to swing, because it's always about swinging and the blues. From listening to her music, piano players can learn how to play because she could just flat out play. She played with two hands and she played in many different styles, from the Eastern Seaboard stride school of piano playing to the Kansas City jump style, boogie-woogie piano. She played with tremendous elegance and technical élan. She had flair, and she continued to play through the '70s when they got into sus4 chords and playing fourths and all of that. Mary Lou could play anything.

What is Jazz for Young People®? Hosted by Wynton Marsalis or by special guests, these popular, hour-long, narrated concerts introduce musical concepts to kids — and to the adults who accompany them. Everyone gets involved clapping rhythms, snapping fingers, tapping toes and sometimes even trying scat singing as the whole crowd learns the basics of swing and other jazz fundamentals. Now in its 17th season, we offer six concerts for families and four concerts for school groups each year at our home base in New York, Frederick P. Rose Hall.

What is the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO)? The heart and soul of Jazz at Lincoln Center is our Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra under the leadership of Music Director Wynton Marsalis. Hailed internationally as one of the greatest big bands in the world, the orchestra is made up of 15 of the world's finest jazz soloists and ensemble players. They perform at our home in New York, across the U.S. and around the globe, and collaborate with symphony orchestras, ballet troupes, students and an ever-growing roster of guest artists. Click here to meet the band: http://www.jalc.org/jazzcast/jvid_band09.html.

Why is this competition only open to girls? Mary Lou Williams did not consider herself a great female jazz musician. She was simply a great jazz musician. But toward the end of her life she did offer advice to women who worried about how they might fare in the traditionally masculine jazz world. "You've got to play, that's all," she said. "No musician ever refused to play with me. Nobody ever refused to play my music or my arrangements.... Do your work to the best of your ability and you'll get through." In this spirit, we are supporting only female musicians in this competition.

Why is the age limit 15? Mary Lou Williams was a child prodigy. At age 10 she was performing with members of the Earl Hines band. And by 14 she'd hit the road with a vaudeville show. We hope to find a young pianist on a similar path, someone who, like Mary Lou, is talented, soulful and up for a great adventure.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Can I play the entire transcription without any improvisation? No. Being a great jazz musician means being a great improviser. *We ask that you improvise either the entire 2nd or 3rd chorus.* You can also choose to improvise both the 2nd AND 3rd choruses.

Can I improvise over the entire piece without playing the transcription? No. We'd like all of our competitors to experience playing Mary Lou's music just as she performed it herself. We also want our concert audience to hear what Mary Lou sounded like.

How long should my video be? Maximum five minutes.

May I include other musicians in my video performance? Yes, you can record your performance solo, or with accompaniment by any combination of drums, bass and guitar.

May I edit the audio or video by putting different pieces together? No. Please record your performance in one take. It will make it much easier to get a sense of how you perform and how you'll sound with the JLCO.

Does the video have to show me playing my instrument throughout? Yes. We want to see your musical performance.

Will I still own the rights to my video after I send it to Jazz at Lincoln Center? Yes. You will retain ownership rights over your video, but you are required to grant limited license rights to Jazz at Lincoln Center to share the footage online or elsewhere for promotional purposes.

What is the deadline for submitting my video? The deadline is Wednesday October 14, 2009, 5:00PM EST. Get started now!

When will I find out if I've won? The winner will be announced on our website, www.jalc.org, on Wednesday, October 21, 2009.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONCERT EVENT:

How long is the Jazz for Young People concert? Each concert is roughly an hour long.

How many concerts will the winning pianist perform? The winning pianist will perform on four concerts total; the two shows on November 6 (at 10am and 12:15pm) are for school groups and the two shows on November 7 (at 1pm and 3pm) are for families.

Will the winning pianist rehearse with the band? Yes. The winning pianist is required to join Wynton and the JLCO for rehearsals on November 5th.

If I win, can I bring my whole family to the concert? Yes. Both the winner and the runner-up will receive 4 free tickets for their family and friends. To purchase additional tickets call CenterCharge at 212-721-6500, visit our box office at 60th Street and Broadway, or order online at https://tickets.jalc.org/ticketing/show_events_list.asp.

Will the winning pianist definitely perform with the JLCO in Rose Theater? No. We hope to find a spectacular young pianist who can perform Mary Lou Williams' music at the highest possible level with our band. But we know that this is a tall order. This music is not easy and there is not a lot of time to practice it. If we cannot find a candidate who is ready to perform this music in Rose Theater, we will feature the winner in an alternate venue before or after the main stage concert. The winner will still join the JLCO for rehearsal.

I won the competition! What do I have to do now? Congratulations! Keep practicing and relax; we'll contact you to let you know what the next steps are.

I won the competition! Do I need to make my own travel and hotel arrangements?

No, you do not; we'll coordinate and pay for the arrangements to get you and one guardian to New York City for the rehearsal and concerts.

Even if I don't get selected to perform, can I come to the concert? Of course, you're welcome to come and to bring your friends and family. However, this is a ticket-only event and everyone needs a ticket to attend. To purchase tickets call CenterCharge at 212-721-6500, visit our box office at 60th Street and Broadway, or order online at https://tickets.jalc.org/ticketing/show_events_list.asp.