



WYNTON MARSALIS – OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY

Wynton Marsalis stands in a league all his own. He has been described as a creative genius, compassionate humanitarian, legendary trumpeter, masterful composer, arts advocate, tireless educator and cultural leader. However, it is Wynton's lifetime commitment to inspiring and uplifting people through artistic excellence in jazz that has made an unparalleled impact on domestic and international culture.

Wynton Learson Marsalis was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 18, 1961 – the second of six sons to Ellis and Dolores Marsalis. Wynton was immersed in the tradition of his hometown since birth. However, when he received his first trumpet from Al Hirt at age six, he wasn't initially serious about the instrument – that is, until age 12. Within the next two years, he flourished and won a competition playing Haydn's Trumpet Concerto in Eb major with the New Orleans Philharmonic. Wynton continued playing throughout the Crescent City in concert, marching and jazz brass bands, gospel churches, symphonic orchestras and various funk bands and modern jazz ensembles. At age 17, he became the youngest musician ever to be admitted to Tanglewood's Berkshire Music Center. Despite his youth, he was awarded the school's prestigious Harvey Shapiro Award for outstanding brass student. Wynton moved to New York in 1979 to study at the Juilliard School. He left school in 1981 to join the finest finishing school in jazz, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers.

Wynton has received a comprehensive education in jazz and the arts from a group of legendary mentors. In New Orleans, his father Ellis, a dedicated jazz pianist and educator, taught him modern jazz; and Dr. Bert Braud taught him classical theory at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts. Renowned banjoist Danny Barker trained him in the rudiments of New Orleans Jazz as he led the legendary Fairview Baptist Church band, which Wynton joined at the age of 8. In the years to follow, Wynton was educated by blues trumpet master 'Sweets' Edison, a celebrated member of Count Basie's epochal 1930s band, and Clark Terry, a most treasured member of Ellington's 1950s Orchestra. Wynton also toured with Miles Davis's second great rhythm section - Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams and Ron Carter – and toured with and was mentored by drummer Elvin Jones, the engine of Coltrane's Classic Quartet, and John Lewis, the artistic director of the Modern Jazz Quartet.

At 19, he recorded his first jazz album as a leader, and at the age of 20, he assembled his own band and hit the road – performing more than 120 concerts a year around the world for 20 consecutive years. To date, he has produced more than 60 records, selling more than 7 million records worldwide including 3 Gold Records. Wynton holds the distinction of being the only artist to ever win GRAMMY® Awards for both jazz and classical records and the only artist to win GRAMMY® Awards in five consecutive years.

Wynton also has a lifelong appreciation and involvement with classical music. Wynton recorded the Haydn, Hummel and Leopold Mozart trumpet concertos at the age of 21 and went on to record 10 additional classical records, all to critical acclaim. He has performed with leading orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, and the Czech National Orchestra.



Composing is a constant for Wynton. His inventiveness has been widely embraced, having received numerous commissions to create major compositions. Garth Fagan Dance, The New York City Ballet, Twyla Tharp with the American Ballet Theatre, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and Savion Glover have all danced to Wynton's compositions. He collaborated with the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society in 1995 to compose the string quartet, *At the Octoroon Balls*, and again in 1998 to create a response to Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* with his composition, *A Fiddler's Tale*. At the dawn of the new millennium (1999), Wynton presented his first symphony, *All Rise*. This epic composition for big band, gospel choir and symphony orchestra was performed by the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Kurt Masur along with the Morgan State University Choir, under the direction of Dr. Nathan Carter, and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Wynton's long relationship with Ghanaian master drummer Yacub Addy led to the composition and premiere of *Congo Square* in 2006. This piece redefines the intersection of African music and American jazz. *Abyssinian 200: A Celebration* was commissioned by the Abyssinian Baptist Church to commemorate their 200th anniversary. This Mass composed by Wynton was performed in 2008 with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, The Abyssinian Baptist Church Choir and Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III. It developed ideas originally presented in Wynton's 1992 landmark, *In This House on This Morning*, a piece that was heard nationwide during an unprecedented tour of African-American churches.

Wynton's second symphony, *Blues Symphony*, is his latest composition. It celebrates the blues through the prism of different periods in American history. Comprising seven movements, each with a distinct sound and historic reference point, *Blues Symphony* is written in the tradition of Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson and Jelly Roll Morton and finds its foundation in American root music.

Based on the groundwork established by his mentors' teachings and his first-hand experiences interacting with people of all ages and cultures, Wynton co-founded Jazz at Lincoln Center – the world's first and foremost institution dedicated to jazz education and performance.

At 48 years old, his achievements are unrivaled – from receiving, among many others, the prestigious Aljur H. Meadows Award for Excellence in the Arts and history-making GRAMMY®, Pulitzer, and Peabody awards to being recognized as one of America's 25 most influential people, appointed as a UN Messenger of Peace, honored with the National Medal of Arts and, most recently, awarded the French Legion of Honor.

The most extraordinary dimension of Wynton is not his accomplishments, but his character. Whether waiting in an empty parking lot for an hour after a concert to give an aspiring musician advice, or for a single student to return from home with his horn for a trumpet lesson, or personally funding scholarships for students, Wynton donates his time and talent to make a difference in the lives of individuals and to help raise money for charitable organizations. Wynton has been a tireless advocate for marshalling the will and resources necessary to rebuild New Orleans culturally, socially and economically. Wynton's commitment to the improvement of life for all people embodies the best of his character and humanity and drives him to continually strive to do more.



HONORARY DEGREES WYNTON MARSALIS

1988

1. Brown University (Doctor of Music)
2. Southern University at New Orleans (Doctor of Music)

1990

3. University at Buffalo - State University of New York (Doctor of Music)

1992

4. Boston University (Doctor of Music)

1993

5. Academy of Southern Arts and Letters (Doctor of Philosophy in Arts)

1994

6. University of Miami (Doctor of Music)

1995

7. Hunter College (Doctor of Humane Letters)
8. Manhattan School of Music (Doctor of Music)
9. Princeton University (Doctor of Arts)
10. Yale University (Doctor of Music)

1996

11. Brandeis University (Doctor of Humane Letters)
12. Columbia University (Doctor of Music)
13. Governors State University (Doctor of Humane Letters)
14. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Doctor of Fine Arts)
15. Royal Academy of Music (Honorary Member)
16. University of Scranton (Doctor of Fine Arts)

1997

17. Amherst College (Doctor of Music)
18. Howard University (Doctor of Music)
19. Long Island University (Doctor of Music)
20. Rutgers University (Doctor of Fine Arts)

1998

21. Bard College (Doctor of Fine Arts)
22. Haverford College (Doctor of Humane Letters)

1999

23. University of Massachusetts Amherst (Doctor of Fine Arts)

2000

24. Middlebury College (Doctor of Arts)
25. University of Pennsylvania (Doctor of Music)

2001

26. Clark Atlanta University (Doctorate of Humane Letters)
27. Connecticut College (Doctor of Fine Arts)

2004

28. Bloomfield College (Doctor of Fine Arts)

2007

29. New York University (Doctor of Fine Arts)

2009

30. Harvard University (Doctor of Music)
31. Northwestern University (Doctor of Arts)