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Washington Performing Arts Presents Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with 2025 Ambassador of the Arts Award

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 17, 2025 –Washington Performing Arts proudly announced **Wynton Marsalis** and the **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra** as recipients of the organization's **2025 Ambassador of the Arts Award** during the ensemble's June 16, 2025, performance at The Kennedy Center Concert Hall. The award honors the Orchestra's and Marsalis' extraordinary contributions to music, education, and cultural advocacy over a partnership spanning more than four decades.

The *Ambassador of the Arts Award*, established in 2013, recognizes individuals and ensembles whose accomplishments, service, and advocacy have made a lasting impact on the performing arts. Few recipients exemplify this spirit more than Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, whose visionary leadership and commitment have reshaped how America, and the world, experiences jazz.

A Deep and Enduring Partnership

The relationship between Wynton Marsalis and Washington Performing Arts dates back to Marsalis' early 20s, when then-President Douglas Wheeler booked Marsalis' quintet for a performance at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. That moment laid the foundation for a decades-long collaboration rooted in mutual respect and artistic growth.

Over the years, Washington Performing Arts and Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra have partnered on numerous occasions—presenting concerts, music education residencies, summer institutes, and community engagement events. Highlights include the Washington, D.C., premiere of *Blood on the Fields*, the commissioned world premiere of *Suite for Human Nature*, the extensive revision and performance of *Blues Symphony* with Shenandoah Conservatory Orchestra, and the Capital Jazz Partnership program in collaboration with DC Public Schools. Even amid the challenges of the pandemic, the partnership continued with virtual programming

with Marsalis in conversation with other guest artists on Washington Performing Arts' *Home Delivery Plus* series.

"Perhaps one of the deepest relationships in our organization's history," said **President Emeritus Doug Wheeler**, reflecting on the connection between Marsalis and Washington Performing Arts.

An Artist and Ensemble of Global Impact

Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra are celebrated not only for their musical excellence but also for their far-reaching influence. Their achievements include Grammy and Peabody Awards, and Marsalis made history as the first jazz artist to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music. The ensemble's tours, recordings, and broadcasts have brought jazz to audiences across the globe.

Their educational mission is equally profound, having established a new standard for outreach by engaging students of all ages in the language of jazz—a uniquely American art form that embodies spontaneity, improvisation, and democratic values.

Marsalis has given institutional shape to the jazz world, preserving its heritage while ensuring its continued evolution. "They have refreshed the jazz tradition and continued to make it new," states the official *Ambassador of the Arts* citation.

Ambassadors of the Arts

Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra truly embody the designation *Ambassadors of the Arts*. Through their artistic virtuosity, dedication to social justice, and unwavering advocacy, they have demonstrated how the arts can elevate discourse, cultivate empathy, and drive societal progress.

"For all that they have accomplished, and all that they will continue to achieve, Washington Performing Arts is proud to honor its dear friends Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with this year's *Ambassador of the Arts Award*," said **Jenny Bilfield, President and CEO of Washington Performing Arts**.

About the Ambassador of the Arts Award

Past honorees include Washington Performing Arts President Emeritus Douglas H. Wheeler (2022), operatic bass Soloman Howard (2021), violinist Midori (2020), Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (2015), and soprano Jessye Norman (2013), among others.

About Washington Performing Arts

One of the most established and honored performing arts institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts has engaged for more than half a century with artists, audiences, students, and civic life. The city is truly our stage: for decades, in venues ranging from concert halls and clubs to public parks, we have presented a tremendous range of artists and art forms, from the most distinguished symphony orchestras to both renowned and emerging artists in classical music, jazz, international genres, and more. We also have an ever-expanding artistic and educational presence on the internet, envisioning ongoing opportunities for online connection and community.

Washington Performing Arts deeply values its partnerships with local organizations and other arts institutions. Through events online and in myriad performance venues and neighborhoods, we engage international visiting artists in community programs and introduce local artists to wider audiences. We place a premium on establishing artists as a continuing presence in the lives of both young people and adults through residencies and education programs.

Our achievements have been recognized with a National Medal of Arts and with three Mayor's Arts Awards from the DC Government. We have now embarked upon our second half-century, ever inspired by the motto of our founder, Patrick Hayes: "Everybody in, nobody out."

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