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JUNE 24, 2011, 12:00 A.M.**

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National Endowment for the Arts Announces the 2012 NEA Jazz Masters

30th anniversary of nation's highest honor in jazz

Washington, DC – The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) today announced the recipients of the 2012 NEA Jazz Masters Award—the nation's highest honor in jazz. The five recipients will receive a one-time award of \$25,000 and be publicly honored at the annual awards ceremony and concert, produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center at its home, Frederick P. Rose Hall in New York City.

With this class, the NEA is celebrating the 30th anniversary of the NEA Jazz Masters Awards, which recognize outstanding musicians for their lifetime achievements and significant contributions to the development and performance of jazz.

The 2012 NEA Jazz Masters are:

Jack DeJohnette, Drummer, Keyboardist, Composer
(born in Chicago, IL; lives in Willow, NY)

Von Freeman, Saxophonist
(born in Chicago, IL; lives in Chicago, IL)

Charlie Haden, Bassist, Composer, Educator
(born in Shenandoah, IA; lives in Agoura Hills, CA)

Sheila Jordan, Vocalist, Educator
(born in Detroit, MI; lives in Middleburgh, NY and New York, NY)

***Jimmy Owens**, Educator, Trumpeter, Flugelhorn Player, Composer, Arranger
(born in Bronx, NY; lives in New York, NY)

*Jimmy Owens is the recipient of the 2012 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy.

“These artists represent the highest level of artistic mastery and we are proud to recognize their achievements,” said NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman. “Through their contributions, we have been challenged, enlightened, and charmed, and we thank them for devoting their careers to expanding and supporting their art forms.”

“Jazz is considered by many as one of America’s greatest cultural gifts to the world,” said Wayne S. Brown, NEA Director of Music and Opera. “These artists are being recognized for their extraordinary contribution to advancing the art form and for serving as mentors for a new generation of young aspiring jazz musicians.”

Each member of the 2012 NEA Jazz Masters class is a distinguished artist whose significant lifetime contributions have helped to enrich jazz and further the growth of the art form:

- Widely regarded as one of the great drummers in modern jazz, **Jack DeJohnette** has a wide-ranging style that makes him a dynamic sideman and bandleader. His versatility on the drums is accented by DeJohnette’s additional accomplishments as a keyboardist: he studied classical piano for ten years before taking up drums.
- **Earle Lavon “Von” Freeman, Sr.** is considered a founder of the “Chicago School” of jazz tenor saxophonists. With his individual sound, at once husky and melodic, he makes every song his own. As the *Chicago Tribune* has written of him, “For technical brilliance, musical intellect, harmonic sophistication, and improvisatory freedom, Von Freeman has few bebop-era peers.”
- Lyrical and expressive on the bass, **Charlie Haden** has embraced a variety of musical genres, ranging from jazz to country to world music. His work as an educator led to the creation of the Jazz Studies program at California Institute of the Arts in 1982 where he focuses on the spirituality of improvisation.
- **Sheila Jordan** is not only one of the premier singers in jazz, but she is known for her stimulating vocal workshops as well. A superb scat singer, she can just as easily reach the emotional depths of a ballad.
- **Jimmy Owens** is a jazz trumpeter, composer, arranger, educator, and music education consultant. His involvement as an advocate regarding the rights of jazz artists led to the founding of the Jazz Musician's Emergency Fund, a program of the Jazz Foundation of America.

[Full profiles](#) of the 2012 NEA Jazz Masters are located on the NEA’s website.

The NEA Jazz Masters awards were announced in conjunction with the announcement of the NEA National Heritage Fellowships and NEA Opera Honors recipients. Please go to arts.gov for the list of these recipients.

For the January awards ceremony and concert, the Arts Endowment will again partner with Jazz at Lincoln Center to produce the event. The awards ceremony and concert will feature the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis and other special guests in a program dedicated to the honorees’ lives and works and the program’s 30th anniversary. Since 2003-04, the NEA and Jazz at Lincoln Center have partnered on collaborations including NEA Jazz in the Schools, a web-based curriculum designed for high school teachers and students to explore the history of jazz, integrating that story with the sweep of social, economic, and political developments in the United States. The free, cross-disciplinary curriculum is available online at neajazzintheschools.org.

About NEA Jazz Masters: Each year since 1982, the Arts Endowment has conferred the NEA Jazz Masters Award to living legends who have made major contributions to jazz. With this new class, 124

awards have been given to great figures of jazz in America, including Count Basie, George Benson, Art Blakey, Dave Brubeck, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Herbie Hancock, John Levy, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Cecil Taylor, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson, and the Marsalis Family.

NEA Jazz Masters are selected from nominations submitted by the public and receive a one-time fellowship award of \$25,000, are honored at a public awards ceremony, and may participate in NEA-sponsored promotional, performance, and educational activities. Only living musicians or jazz advocates may be nominated for the NEA Jazz Masters honor.

In addition to NEA Jazz in the Schools, a partnership with Jazz at Lincoln Center, the NEA's jazz programs include NEA Jazz Masters Live, a series of performance and educational engagements in selected communities, featuring NEA Jazz Masters; radio programming featuring NEA Jazz Masters; and publications and reports. For more information on NEA Jazz Masters, the public is invited to visit the website, at neajazzmasters.org.

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at arts.gov.

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, a jazz hall of fame, weekly national radio 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, Chairman Lisa Schiff, and Executive Director Adrian Ellis, Jazz at Lincoln Center produces thousands of events each season in its home in New York City, Frederick P. Rose Hall, and around the world. For more information, visit jalc.org.

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