

LIVE

FROM LINCOLN CENTER



Wynton Marsalis turns 50 on October 18!

It's hard to reconcile that fact for two reasons. First, Wynton has been a music headliner for so long, how can he be as young as 50? Secondly, many of us remember him as an extraordinary teen-ager; how can he already be approaching the mature age of 50? In any case Live From Lincoln Center, which has featured Wynton and his music on a number of previous programs, will salute his milestone birthday in a special edition on Thursday evening, October 13. Joining him and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra on stage will be other luminaries from the world of jazz including tap dancer Jared Grimes; vocalist Gregory Porter; pianist Marcus Roberts; violinist Marc O'Connor; Yacub Addy and Odadaa!; and Damien Sneed and Chorale Le Chateau.

Wynton is the second of six sons born to Ellis and Dolores Marsalis, who may be said to have created a Marsalis dynasty: following in the footsteps of their father the dominant force in the lives of all of them has been music. So indelibly identified is Wynton with jazz that it may come as a surprise to some to learn that he was thoroughly educated and trained in classical music. By the time he was 14 he had already appeared as a soloist with the orchestra of his native city, the New Orleans Philharmonic. And he was a prized member of a variety of New Orleans music establishments. At 17 he became the youngest member ever admitted to the Boston Symphony's summer music academy, the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, and he proceeded to win the prize there for outstanding brass student.

Two years later he moved to New York to study at the Juilliard School, one of the world's outstanding music conservatories and a constituent member of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The buzz began to spread about this remarkable new musician in town, and he was soon expanding his classical music education with studies with the master jazz drummer, Art Blakey. Simultaneously he was forging a career as a classical music solo trumpeter, appearing as soloist with the likes of the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London. He also, at the age of 20, began a career as a classical music recording artist; he is the only musician ever to receive Grammy Awards in both the classical and jazz fields in the same year!

The New York Philharmonic, which had been absent from the airwaves for 9 seasons, returned to national radio in 1975. It was my privilege and honor to serve as host and commentator for those broadcasts for the next 13 seasons. An early soloist in those years

was Wynton Marsalis, playing the Haydn Trumpet Concerto. He was my guest during the intermission of the concert, and in the course of our conversation he revealed the startling news that this appearance was likely to be his last as a classical musician: from that time on his life would be devoted to jazz.

Thus it was that in 1981 he formed his own band and toured the length and breadth of the United States, rekindling an appreciation and love for the medium and serving as inspiration for a whole new generation of jazz musicians. Six years later, in collaboration with Lincoln Center, he co-founded a jazz program which proved to be so successful that in 1996 Jazz at Lincoln Center was installed as one of the constituent members of Lincoln Center, alongside the likes of the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, and the Juilliard School. Wynton is the Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center and Music Director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. The scope of Jazz at Lincoln Center embraces far more than the orchestra's performances: there is a Band Director's Academy; a concert series called Jazz for Young People; Jazz in the Schools; a Middle School Jazz Academy; a series called WeBop! for children from 8 months to 5 years old; and a yearly High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival.

We of Live From Lincoln Center are privileged to salute Wynton Marsalis on Thursday evening, October 13, on the occasion of his 50th Birthday. And that salute will take a unique form: our live broadcast will be on the air for one hour, with a second hour streamed live on the PBS web site.

As always I leave you with the suggestion that you contact your local PBS station for the exact time and date of the program in your area.

Enjoy!

MARTIN BOOKSPAN