In 1979, at the age of 18, Wynton was accepted to Juilliard, and as he began to “gig” in New York City, the music grapevine started to buzz. Wynton attracted the attention of Columbia Records, who signed him to his first recording contract. In 1980, Wynton was offered the unique opportunity to tour Europe as a member of the well-established group, Jazz Messengers, and to study with master drummer and bandleader, Art Blakey. In 1981, Wynton assembled his own band and hit the road, performing more than 120 concerts every year for 15 consecutive years. With his superior musicianship and infectious personality, he rekindled a world-wide interest in jazz.

Wynton’s love of the western classical composers drove him to simultaneously pursue a career in classical music as well as jazz. At age 20, he recorded the trumpet concertos of Haydn, Hummel and Leopold Mozart. His debut recording won the Grammy Award for “Best Classical Soloist with an Orchestra.” He performed with every leading orchestra in the country including New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Cleveland and St. Louis. The theme song for CBS Sunday Morning is performed by Wynton Marsalis:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zYjBHC9WKA&t=52s

Wynton has produced over 100 records which have sold over 7 million copies worldwide, including three Gold Records. He has toured in 30 countries and on every continent except Antarctica. In 1987, he helped start the Classical Jazz summer concert series at Lincoln Center. The series was so successful that it became an independent entity in 1996, and Marsalis became the first

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artistic director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, which performs at its home venue in Rose Hall, and also tours the world.xvi

Beyond his work as a performer, Marsalis is a prolific composer. In 1997, he became the first jazz musician to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his work, Blood on the Fields.xvii The piece premiered on January 28, 1997, at Woolsey Hall, Yale University, in New Haven.xviii Here’s Part 1 (Calling The Indians Out) from that award-winning work: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjH1pDruQDM&list=PLKNSWG-ZO37jQBzxLDcGV_kPP_eFFG-SC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjH1pDruQDM&list=PLKNSWG-ZO37jQBzxLDcGV_kPP_eFFG-SC) The award is especially noteworthy because for the five decades that preceded that award, the Pulitzer Prize jury had refused to recognize jazz musicians, reserving that distinction only for classical composers.xix In the years since the award was given to Marsalis, the Pulitzer Prize for music has been awarded posthumously to other jazz greats, including Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane.xx

Wynton composed a violin concerto and four symphonies, which introduced new rhythms to the classical music canon.xxi 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.xxii He continued his symphonic compositions with All Rise, a composition for big band, gospel choir and symphony orchestra, which was premiered in December of 1999 by the New York Philharmonic, with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the Morgan State University Choir, conducted by Kurt Masur.xxiii Marsalis’ violin concerto, composed for Scottish violin virtuoso, Nicola Benedetti, is “fundamental Americana” with “sweeping melodies, jazzy orchestral dissonances, blues-tinged themes, fancy-fiddling and a rhythmic swagger.”xxiv The story of the collaboration between Marsalis and violinist Nicola Benedetti in the creation of the Concerto may be heard here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzxZ4CmqViY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzxZ4CmqViY) On our masterworks concert this month, Concertmaster Lenny Sigal will perform two movements from that Concerto, Blues and Hootenanny.

Marsalis has become an internationally respected teacher and advocate for music education. In 2001, he was appointed Messenger of Peace by Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations.xxv Marsalis has been designated as cultural ambassador to the United States of America by the U.S. State Department through the CultureConnect Program.xxvi He was instrumental in the Higher Ground Hurricane Relief concert, produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center, which raised more than $3 million to benefit the musicians and other music-industry related enterprises and individuals in Greater New Orleans who were impacted by Hurricane Katrina.xxvii

Happy 60th birthday, Mr. Marsalis. We can’t wait to hear what you will do next.
For pure fun, watch these wonderful clips of our featured composer, Wynton Marsalis:

Listen to the *Genius of Jazz*, featuring Wynton Marsalis and famed jazz pianist, Jon Batiste, at The Aspen Institute: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPshEdJvKj4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPshEdJvKj4)

Eerily reminiscent of Bernstein’s famed *Young People’s Concerts*, Wynton Marsalis led a series about music for children at the Tanglewood Music Center in 1995: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLT7jQAtbj0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLT7jQAtbj0) (Volume 1)

If you enjoyed listening to Wynton, here’s Volume 2 of his 1995 lecture at Tanglewood Music Center: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GNLsr4QgjE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GNLsr4QgjE)

And here’s Volume 3 in the series: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFzo8fcS0Ec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFzo8fcS0Ec)

Want to hear Wynton in glorious performance? Listen to the London concert featuring the Haydn, Hummel and (Leopold) Mozart trumpet concertos: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSemBZL8UDE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSemBZL8UDE)

WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC WILL SOUND?

Try HSO’S LISTENING GUIDE, with links to the pieces you’ll hear on our concert stage – and more!

Performance of Copland’s *Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXikDnYZypM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXikDnYZypM)

and a performance by the American Ballet Theatre in 1973: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PGkJkpK1yU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PGkJkpK1yU)

Watch Bernstein conduct the Israel Philharmonic in his own composition, *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srb2EyvTSGw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srb2EyvTSGw)

Performance of *Hootenanny* from the Violin Concerto in D Major by Wynton Marsalis: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfhUV4BkbYU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfhUV4BkbYU)

Performance of *Blues* from Marsalis’ Violin Concerto in D Major: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlaF2iu8zvl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlaF2iu8zvl)

Curious about the man behind the music of Leonard Bernstein?

Listen to this wonderful lecture by famed psychiatrist and concert pianist, Dr. Richard Kogan, in his presentation of “The Mind and the Music of Leonard Bernstein”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDPPWxNUsG4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDPPWxNUsG4)

Interested in hearing more from Copland?

His *Lincoln Portrait* was originally programmed to open HSO’s 2020/2021 season. Listen to the piece, performed by the Seattle Symphony and narrated by the iconic African American actor, James Earl Jones: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dW1pFvbnNk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dW1pFvbnNk)
Want the best recordings of the pieces you’ll experience on the concert program? Coleman Casey, HSO’s dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.

An all-American program immediately summons the name of America’s foremost conductor, Leonard Bernstein, who conducts definitive performances of his On the Waterfront and the Symphonic Dances from West Side Story, all with the New York Philharmonic (SONY).

Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein were life-long friends, so it is perhaps no surprise that Bernstein’s reading of the famous Copland ballets, including the Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo, have never been better performed than by Bernstein with the New York Philharmonic (SONY).
References

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