

The National Jazz Museum in Harlem  
104 East 126th Street  
New York, NY 10035  
212 348-8300  
<http://www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org/>

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 1/31/08**

## ***National Jazz Museum in Harlem's February Schedule***

- ***Jazz for Curious Listeners focus on Duke Ellington!!***
- ***Jazz for Curious Readers with critic Gary Giddins***
  - ***Performance by pianist Geoff Keezer***
  - ***Harlem Speaks: Cedar Walton and Ron Blake!***

February 2008 brings more magnificent programming by the National Jazz Museum in Harlem for your aesthetic pleasure! From an exclusive focus on the genius of Duke Ellington for **Jazz for Curious Listeners**, to several special concerts in honor of Black History month, to a discussion with perhaps the greatest living jazz critic/journalist, Gary Giddins, for **Jazz for Curious Listeners**, we've got something for all levels.

The museum's flagship series, **Harlem Speaks**, will find the great pianist and composer Cedar Walton and saxophonist Ron Blake on separate nights;

As hard as this may be to believe, we have even more in store for you, so read below and get hip.

Thank you!

**Sunday, February 3, 2008**

### **Memories of the Apollo Theater and Savoy Ballroom**

**Location:** DeNaples Campus Center, 4th floor  
The University of Scranton  
FREE | Information: 570-941-7624  
[Informational Flyer](#)

#### **HARLEM SPEAKS**

**Jacque "Tajah" Murdock**  
2:00 pm, DeNaples Theater

**Free group swing dance lesson  
with Gail Ercoli and Vince Brust**  
3:00 pm, DeNaples Ballroom

**Swing dance/concert with The National Jazz Museum in Harlem All-Stars Big Band**

3:30 pm, DeNaples Ballroom

**Tuesday, February 5, 2008**

**JAZZ for CURIOUS LISTENERS**

7:00 pm | At the Harlem School of the Arts  
645 St. Nicholas Ave. (off 141<sup>st</sup> Street)  
FREE

**The Genius of Ellington - The Blues  
with Christian McBride**

From at least the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the blues form has been a staple of American music. In its basic form, the blues is a 12-bar form with a progression of three basic chords. In the hands of the Maestro, Duke Ellington, the blues became a source of compositional genius on display in hundreds of songs. Tonight Christian McBride, co-director of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, will discuss and demonstrate via musical examples, the plethora of blues moods that Ellington innovated for his peerless jazz orchestra.

**Thursday, February 7, 2008**

**HARLEM SPEAKS**

**Cedar Walton, Composer/Pianist/Band Leader**

6:30 pm | at the Harlem School of the Arts  
645 St. Nicholas Ave. (off 141<sup>st</sup> Street)  
call 212-348-8300 to RSVP  
FREE

For over 25 years, pianist Cedar Walton has enjoyed an uptempo career, which never seems to slow down. Maintaining a non-stop itinerary, Walton has accompanied a litany of jazz greats while also fronting his own successful groups.

Born January 17, 1934 in Dallas, Texas, Walton set his sights on a career in music at an early age. An after-hours gig at the Denver Club introduced him to notable musicians like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and John Coltrane, who would sit in with Walton's group when they passed through town.

From there, Walton ventured to New York and began to work locally with Lou Donaldson, Gigi Gryce, Sonny Rollins and Kenny Dorham before landing his first touring job with J.J. Johnson. Soon after, the pianist made his recording debut backing Kenny Dorham on the Riverside album *Kenny Dorham Sings*. He also made two records with J.J. Johnson's group on Columbia Records before joining the Art Farmer/Benny Golson Jazztet, a group he toured and recorded with for two years. Walton's next major musical association was with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. During his three years tenure with Blakey, Walton stepped forward a composer, contributing originals like "Mosaic" and "The Promised Land" to the group's recordings for the Blue Note and Riverside labels.

Walton left the Jazz Messengers to lead rhythm sections and trios throughout the New York club and recording studio circuits. His debut recording as a leader came in 1966 with the release of *Cedar* on Prestige Records. From the late '60s to early '70s, Walton kept steady company with bassist Sam Jones and drummers Louis Hayes and Billy Higgins in multi-purpose trios that occasionally annexed saxophonists Clifford Jordan, George Coleman or Bob Berg for specific tours and albums.

During the '80s, Walton embarked on a variety of interesting projects, which have grown into lasting affiliations. In 1981, he formed a trio with Ron Carter and Billy Higgins, which clicked right from the start. Around the same time, Walton became part of the Timeless All-stars, a sextet also featuring Harold Land, Bobby Hutcherson, Curtis Fuller, Buster Williams and Billy Higgins. Walton also ignited rhythm sections behind the likes of Milt Jackson, Frank Morgan, Dexter Gordon and vocalists Ernestine Anderson and Freddy Cole, and held the piano chair of The Trumpet Summit Band.

Walton's efforts have been well documented on record. In addition to a host of dates as a sideman, the pianist has been recording with his own groups at a prolific rate, as evidenced by an assortment of albums on the Timeless, Discovery, Red Baron and Steeple Chase record labels.

Walton is one of the most influential musicians active today. His original compositions like "Bolivia," "Clockwise" and "Firm Roots" are frequently recorded by other musicians, and have become part of the standard jazz repertoire. His playing regularly receives praise from critics, fellow jazz musicians and audience around the world. Cedar Walton has emerged as a true master of the music he loves.

**Monday, February 11, 2008**

## **JAZZ FOR CURIOUS READERS**

**Gary Giddins, author and critic**

6:00 - 7:30 pm

New York Public Library 115th Street Branch

203 West 115th Street, New York, NY 10026-2403

**For reservations:** 212-348-8300 or [register online](#)

FREE

Nearly 25 years ago, critic Martin Williams called Gary Giddins "probably the most impressive journalist ever to have written about music." Born in Brooklyn, New York, Giddins graduated from Grinnell College in Iowa, and the following year began working as a freelance writer. In 1973, he joined the *Village Voice*, and a year later introduced his column "Weather Bird," which he ended in December 2003, closing a 30-year run during which he received international recognition and won many prizes, including an unparalleled six ASCAP Deems Taylor Awards for Excellence in Music Criticism.

Giddins' writings on music, books, and movies have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *The Atlantic*, *Grand Street*, *The Nation*, and many other publications. He presently writes columns about music for *Jazz Times* and about film for the *New York Sun*. His first book, *Riding on a Blue Note*, appeared in 1981, and was followed by *Rhythm-a-Ning*, *Faces in the Crowd*, and

critical biographies of Charlie Parker and Louis Armstrong that he adapted into documentary films for PBS; he won a Peabody award for writing the PBS documentary, *John Hammond: From Bessie Smith to Bruce Springsteen*. He has been nominated three times for Grammy Awards, and won in 1987 for his liner notes to *Sinatra: The Voice*.

In 1986, Giddins and the late pianist-composer John Lewis introduced the American Jazz Orchestra, which presented jazz repertory concerts for the next seven years—more than 35 concerts involving Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Tony Bennett, Bobby Short, Muhal Richard Abrams, Gerry Mulligan, Henry Threadgill, Jimmy Heath, David Murray, and many others. He also produced four concerts for Festival Productions at the JVC Jazz Festival, working with Roy Eldridge, Ella Fitzgerald, Gil Evans, Lee Konitz, Joe Williams, Carmen McRae, Johnny Hartman, and, in his New York debut, Bobby McFerrin.

In 1998, Giddins's landmark work *Visions of Jazz* received the National Book Critics Circle Award in criticism—the first time a work on jazz has won a major American literary prize. In 2001, he was featured in Ken Burns's *Jazz*. That year he also published his best-selling biography, *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams*, which won the Ralph J. Gleason Music Book Award, the Theater Library Association Award for books on film and broadcasting, and the ARSC award for historical research into sound recordings.

Giddins has held teaching posts at Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania, Rutgers, and New York University. In 2003, he received a lifetime achievement award from the Jazz Journalist's Association. His 2004 publication, *Weather Bird: Jazz at the Dawn of Its Second Century*, a collection of essays and reviews written between 1990 and 2003, was published by Oxford University Press in November 2004. Oxford published another collection of his writings in the summer of 2006: *Natural Selection: Gary Giddins on Comedy, Film, Music, and Books*. He lives with his wife and daughter in New York.

**Tuesday, February 12, 2008**

**JAZZ for CURIOUS LISTENERS**

7:00 pm | At the Harlem School of the Arts  
645 St. Nicholas Ave. (off 141<sup>st</sup> Street)  
FREE

**The Genius of Ellington - The Pop Songs  
with Christian McBride**

During the 1930s through most of the 1950s jazz was a popular musical form in the United States. During this time, Duke Ellington had numerous hits: "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me," "A Slip of the Lip (Can Sink a Ship)," "Sentimental Lady," and "Main Stem" to name just a few. Come and witness Christian McBride's exploration of the popular songs of an American musical master.

**Saturday, February 16, 2008**

## **SPECIAL EVENT**

### **Black History event**

**Location:** Macy's Brooklyn location

*More information coming soon*

**Tuesday, February 19, 2008**

### **JAZZ for CURIOUS LISTENERS**

7:00 pm | At the Harlem School of the Arts

645 St. Nicholas Ave. (off 141<sup>st</sup> Street)

FREE

### **The Genius of Ellington - The Extended Works**

During Ellington's 50+ year career, much controversy existed about the value of his longer works, beginning with "Black, Brown and Biege," which premiered at Carnegie Hall in 1943. Music critic and promoter John Hammond was particularly critical, saying that Ellington introduced "complex harmonies solely for effect" and dissing Duke for producing music that couldn't be danced to.

What is the compositional worth of Ellington's long works? Will close musical analysis of his extended compositions lessen his reputation, which has achieved legendary and mythical proportions? Or is his music sacrosanct, beyond criticism?

Come find out the answers to these and many other questions concerning Ellington's long works.

**Thursday, February 21, 2008**

### **HARLEM SPEAKS**

#### **Ron Blake, saxophonist**

6:30 - 8:30 pm

**Location:** Harlem School of the Arts

(645 St. Nicholas Avenue | [get directions](#))

FREE | Reservations: 212-348-8300

A big-toned, gutsy, hard-swinging instrumentalist who is known for hard bop and soul-jazz, saxman Ron Blake should not be confused with either the '60s drummer Ronnie Blake, or the late-'90s- early-2000s trumpeter Ron Blake (a session player who has appeared in rock and R&B settings).

Saxophonist Blake (who is best known for his tenor and soprano playing, but can also handle the baritone and alto saxes) can be lyrical or romantic but always brings a lot of grit to his solos; he is obviously well aware of the funkier, bluesier side of jazz and usually doesn't go out of his way to be abstract. Blake brings a long list of influences to his work, and they range from Dexter Gordon, Johnny Griffin, Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, to Grover Washington, Jr., Gene Ammons, and Stanley Turrentine. Blake has been compared to all of those saxmen, and some more valid comparisons include Eddie Harris, Ron Holloway, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, David "Fathead" Newman, and Robert "Bootsie" Barnes (a superb tenor man who is famous in Philadelphia but little-known in other cities).

Although Blake has lived in New York City since the early '90s, he isn't a native of the Big Apple; the improviser was born in the Virgin Islands. Blake was only eight when he began studying the guitar, and at the age of ten, he started learning the sax after being exposed to the record collection of his father (who was seriously into hard bop, soul-jazz and organ combos). Blake's first saxophone was an alto, but eventually, he learned the tenor, soprano, and baritone saxes as well; he also studied the flute.

After leaving the Virgin Islands, Blake ended up in the Midwestern United States, where he graduated from the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan before moving to the Chicago area and attending Northwestern University in Evanston, IL in the 1980s. At Northwestern, Blake studied classical saxophone with Dr. Frederick Hemke, but jazz, not classical, won out -- and the late '80s found Blake playing a lot of bop gigs in Chi-Town (where he crossed paths with local icons like tenor man Von Freeman and pianist Jodie Christian). Although he found that Chicago had a rich jazz scene, Blake didn't stay; in 1990, he moved to Florida after being offered a teaching gig at the University of South Florida. But Blake didn't remain in Florida either; in 1992, he moved to New York City, where he spent five years in trumpeter Roy Hargrove's quintet and seven years in flugelhornist Art Farmer's group.

By the early 2000s, Blake was leading his own quartet, which included pianist Shedrick Mitchell, bassist Reuben Rogers, and drummer Greg Hutchinson. Blake's first album as a leader, *Up Front & Personal*, was released on the Tahmun label in 2000. That CD was followed by 2003's Christian McBride-produced *Lest We Forget*, a Mack Avenue release that found Blake paying tribute to three soul-jazz greats who had died: Grover Washington, Jr., Stanley Turrentine, and organist Charles Earland.

**Thursday, February 21, 2008**

### **SPECIAL EVENT**

#### **Black History event**

6:00 pm

**Location:** 8th floor Macy's 34th Street, Herald Square

*More information coming soon*

Jazz flourished uptown at the Apollo Theater and the Savoy Ballroom; downtown it found its home on fabled 52nd Street, between 5th and 6th Avenues. Join National Jazz Museum in Harlem Executive Director **Loren Schoenberg** and special guests (including Count Basie dancer **Jacquie Tajah Murdock**) as they tell fascinating tales about Billie Holiday, Miles Davis and Duke Ellington. You can also listen and/or swing dance to the **Jazz Museum in Harlem All-Stars**.

**Friday, February 22, 2008**

### **HARLEM IN THE HIMALAYAS**

#### **Pianist Geoffrey Keezer**

7:00 pm

Rubin Museum of Art  
150 West 17th Street  
New York, NY 10011

Box Office: 212.620.5000 ext. 344  
**\$18** in advance | **\$20** at door

Geoffrey Keezer was born on November 20, 1970 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where both his parents taught music. He began studying piano at age three. After attending the Berklee College of Music in Boston for one year, Geoffrey moved to New York City in 1989, and at the age of 18 became the last pianist to join Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers.

Since then he has worked with virtually all the living legends of Jazz, including three years on the road as the pianist with the Ray Brown Trio. Geoffrey has appeared on numerous recordings as a sideman (including seven for Telarc) and has released nine albums as a leader. The latest is *Sublime: Honoring the Music of Hank Jones*, an ambitious set of duets with pianists Kenny Barron, Chick Corea, Benny Green and Mulgrew Miller.

In 2000, he released an innovative solo piano CD entitled *Zero One* (Dreyfus/GMN). 1998's *Turn Up the Quiet* (Sony) featured Grammy-nominated vocalist Diana Krall along with Joshua Redman and Christian McBride. Geoffrey performed Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" in 1992, with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra conducted by John Mauceri. He has also collaborated closely with Barbara Hendricks, the world-renowned classical artist who also devotes much of her time to jazz, on tours in Japan and Europe. He currently records and performs as a member of the Christian McBride Band.

*Time* Magazine wrote that Geoffrey possesses "a refreshingly open-eared sensibility in the modern manner, and he has more than enough virtuosity and sheer musical wit and intelligence to weave all of his apparently disparate strands of influence into an original and compelling whole."

Geoffrey's composing commissions include "Palm Reader" for the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, "Concerto for Orchestra and Piano," "listen look" for the Saint Joseph Ballet, and "Variables," a set of variations for piano and string quartet written for the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego.

**Tuesday, February 26, 2008**

**JAZZ FOR CURIOUS LISTENERS**

**The Genius of Ellington - On film**

7:00 – 8:30 pm

**Location:** Harlem School of the Arts

(645 St. Nicholas Avenue | [get directions](#))

FREE | Reservations: 212-348-8300 or [register online](#)

Come and witness one of the true geniuses of jazz, Duke Ellington, on film! As occurred with the showing of an entire concert by the Count Basie Orchestra, tonight's presentation will show how special and varied in textures and moods a concert by Ellington was for those fortunate to see the Maestro and his Orchestra live.

Although he is now in the great beyond (perhaps conducting the heavenly hosts in a most swingin' fashion), this evening's film is the next best thing to being there yourself!

*This press release was composed and edited by **Greg Thomas**.*

**The National Jazz Museum in Harlem** has been ensconced in its Harlem offices for over five years now; its public programs now attract several thousand people a year. **Good news: The Victoria Theater on 125<sup>th</sup> Street will be redeveloped and includes space (10,150 sq. feet) for the museum!** If you would like to receive updates on our progress or further information, please contact us online at <http://www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org/contact.html> or by phone at 212-348-8300. To find video clips, event summaries, program updates and photographs galore from our previous programs, venture here:

[www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org](http://www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org)