

All That Jazz

By Cynthia R. Greenlee
STAFF WRITER



Celebrated jazz trumpeter and composer Wynton Marsalis appeared at UNC on February 5, and showed the campus as stated in the November 2, 1995 on-line interview that he enjoys "swinging, soul, not too loud, gut bucket, country, down-home, gumbo-inflected, tabasco sauce-having jazz music" which has broken the mold for modern jazz artists.

The son of legendary pianist Ellis Marsalis, New Orleans native Wynton Marsalis received his first trumpet at the age of six. Music was an integral part of the Marsalis family which also produced tenor saxophonist Branford, formerly of *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno, producer Delfeayo, and drummer Jason.

Since enrolling in Julliard music academy at the age of 18, Marsalis has worked with pioneering musicians and producers, such as Art Blakey and Herbie Hancock. In a musical world that often penalizes musicians for trying different genres, Wynton Marsalis has won awards for both jazz and classical recordings and created the music for a Charlie Brown television special.

Marsalis is the winner of eight Grammys and the youngest musician to win jazz soloist honors three consecutive times. He has opened the ears of America to an art form that is distinctly American and interwoven with the experiences of African-Americans. In 1987, he co-founded the Jazz at Lincoln Center series, remaining its Artistic Director today.

Not only has Marsalis introduced the beauties of jazz to a public accustomed to rock and opera, he has also released a four-part video

series, "Marsalis on Music," that teaches children the rudiments of rhythm and a history of the genre from Sousa to Louis Armstrong. Marsalis continues his role as a music educator through *Making the Music*, a National Public Radio series that broadcasts Thursday nights at 10:00 p.m. *Making the Music* is not merely a collection of vocal and instrumental stylings by jazz greats Bessie Smith, Billie Holliday, and Sarah Vaughan, among others; it examines the development of jazz through the racial and cultural currents in American society.

Between his tours and coaching of protégés such as Dennis Jeter, thirty-three year old Marsalis does find to time to pursue other interests. He authored *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, a book providing accompaniment to his music through black and white photographs as well as his reflections on what it means to be a professional artist. At home, Marsalis plays basketball and spends time with the infant son he fathered with *The Young and the Restless* star Victoria Rowell.

Listen to the most popular jazz musician of this generation. *Blood on the Fields*, one of *Time's* top ten music highlights of 1994, is a good place to start. Rediscover jazz; it's more than music, it's a vibrant pulse of a global Diaspora.