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THOUSANDS OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN "JAZZ IN AMERICA" EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Week-Long Tour Celebrates the Birthday of Rocky Mount Native and Legendary Jazz Pianist & Composer Thelonious Monk (1917 – 1982)

Washington, DC -- With generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, a non-profit education organization, will introduce its *Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum* to thousands of public school students in North Carolina during the week of October 9-13. *Jazz in America* (www.jazzinamerica.org) is the Institute's Internet-based jazz curriculum that is being made available to all 5th, 8th, and 11th grade public school students in the United States. Designed to be a regular part of each school's social studies or American history classes, *Jazz in America* is the first jazz curriculum to use state-of-the-art Internet technology that is offered free of charge on a national basis.

Throughout the week-long visit to North Carolina public schools, the Institute will present a series of jazz assembly programs, jazz band clinics, and vocal master classes. Each assembly program will feature a five-piece jazz combo led by internationally renowned saxophonist Bobby Watson, a presentation called "What is Jazz?" by J.B. Dyas, and a question-and-answer session with students. In addition, jazz drummer Thelonious Monk, Jr., Chairman of the Institute's Board of Trustees and son of the legendary jazz pianist and composer, will make remarks about jazz and its role as America's greatest musical contribution to the world.

Members of the press are invited to attend any of the following events:

Monday, October 9: ROCKY MOUNT

Rocky Mount High School, 308 South Tillery Street
10:00-11:00am Assembly Program for 600 students in auditorium

Tuesday, October 10 (Birthday of Thelonious Monk): RALEIGH

Knightdale High School, 100 Bryan Chalk Lane
8:30-9:30am Jazz band clinic in Room 1306
8:30-9:30am Vocal master class in Room 1330
9:45-10:45am Assembly Program for 900 students in auditorium
Ligon Middle School, 706 E. Lenoir Street
12:00-1:00pm Jazz band clinic in Room 6116
12:00-1:00pm Vocal master class in Room 6114
1:15-2:15pm Assembly Program for 900 students in auditorium

Wednesday, October 11: DURHAM

Hillside High School, 3727 Fayetteville Street
9:00-10:00am Assembly program for 300 students in auditorium



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Members of the press are invited to attend any of the following events (continued):

Thursday, October 12: CHARLOTTE

Harding University High School, 2001 Alleghany Street

10:30-11:30am Jazz band clinic

10:30-11:30am Vocal master class

Myers Park High School, 2400 Colony Road

1:00-2:00pm Assembly Program for 300 students in auditorium

Friday, October 13: CHARLOTTE

Northwest School of the Arts, 1415 Beatties Ford Road

9:00-10:00am Assembly Program for 300 students

10:30-11:30am Jazz band clinic

About the Curriculum

The *Jazz in America* curriculum (www.jazzinamerica.org) presents an introduction to jazz as it evolved in America and spread throughout the world. It defines the characteristics of jazz, explains how to listen to the music, details the many styles of jazz, and highlights some of the musicians who have advanced the art form. The curriculum also focuses on the development of jazz in America by highlighting the major cities that influenced the music. Further, each lesson plan explores the social, economic, and political contexts within which jazz evolved. In addition to the lesson plans, the curriculum website includes a teacher's manual, assessments, and a comprehensive Jazz Resource Library.

About the Musicians

The tour will be headlined by internationally renowned saxophonist and recording artist **Bobby Watson** (www.bobbywatson.com), who rose to prominence as a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and will feature vocalist **Lisa Henry**, a winner of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition. The members of the rhythm section are **Richard Johnson**, piano; **Derek Nievergelt**, bass; and **Otis Brown III**, drums. Brown attended the Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Colony in Aspen, Colorado in the summer of 1999. Nievergelt and Johnson are 1999 graduates of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance, a specialized graduate level college program that enables the world's most gifted young musicians to study tuition-free with the greatest living jazz legends including Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, and Clark Terry.

About the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz

The Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz (www.monkinstitute.org) is a non-profit education organization established in memory of Thelonious Monk, the legendary jazz pianist and composer. Monk believed the best way to learn jazz was from a master of the music. The Institute follows that same philosophy by bringing together the greatest living jazz musicians to teach and inspire young people. The Institute offers the most promising young musicians college level training by America's jazz masters and presents public school-based jazz education programs for people around the world. Helping to fill the tremendous void in arts education left by severe budget cuts in public school funding, the Institute's education programs are provided free to the public and use jazz as the medium to encourage imaginative thinking, creativity, a positive self-image, and respect for one's own and others' cultural heritage.



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About Thelonious Monk

Thelonious Sphere Monk (1917-1982) is recognized as one of the most influential figures in the history of jazz. He was one of the architects of bebop and his impact as a composer and pianist has had a profound influence on every genre of music.

Monk was born on October 10, 1917, in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. His parents, Barbara Batts and Thelonious Monk, later moved the family to New York City. Monk began piano lessons as a young child and by the age of 13 he had won the weekly amateur contest at the Apollo Theater so many times that he was barred from entering. At the age of 19, Monk joined the house band at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, where along with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and a handful of other players, he developed the style of jazz that came to be known as bebop. Monk's compositions, among them "Round Midnight," were the canvasses over which these legendary soloists expressed their musical ideas.

In 1947, Monk made his first recordings as a leader for Blue Note. These albums are some of the earliest documents of his unique compositional and improvisational style, both of which employed unusual repetition of phrases, an offbeat use of space, and joyfully dissonant sounds. That same year, he married his long-time love Nellie Smith and later had two children, Thelonious, Jr. and Barbara (1954-1984). In the decade that followed, Monk played on recordings with Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, and Sonny Rollins and recorded as a leader for Prestige Records and later for Riverside Records. *Brilliant Corners* and *Thelonious Monk with John Coltrane* were two of the albums from this period that brought Monk international attention as a pianist and composer.

In 1957, the Thelonious Monk Quartet, which included John Coltrane, began a regular gig at the Five Spot. The group's performances were hugely successful and received the highest critical praise. Over the next few years, Monk toured the United States and Europe and made some of his most influential recordings. In 1964, Thelonious Monk appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, an honor that has been bestowed on only three other jazz musicians. By this time, Monk was a favorite at jazz festivals around the world, where he performed with his quartet, which included long-time associate Charlie Rouse. In the early '70s he discontinued touring and recording and appeared only on rare occasions at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and the Newport Jazz Festival.

Thelonious Sphere Monk passed away in 1982. His more than 70 compositions are classics that continue to inspire artists in all forms of music. In his lifetime he received numerous awards and continues to be honored posthumously. The Smithsonian Institution has immortalized his work with an archive of his music. In addition, the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp in his honor. A feature documentary on Monk's life, *Straight, No Chaser*, was released to critical acclaim. The Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz was founded to honor Monk by preserving the music to which he dedicated his life. Monk's integrity, originality, and unique approach set a standard that is a shining example for all who strive for musical excellence.

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