

## Kenny Barron

“One of the foremost exponents of the modern mainstream.”—*The Independent*

“One of the top jazz pianists in the world”—*Los Angeles Times*

“The most lyrical piano player of our time.”—*Jazz Weekly*

When Kenny Barron first heard that the National Endowment for the Arts inducted him into its prestigious Jazz Masters class of 2010, he felt honored to be among the greats of music who have also received the U.S.'s top honor in jazz. “I was excited at the acknowledgment of my service,” says the 66-year pianist whose solo career has also garnered him numerous awards in jazz critics and readers polls. Called “one of the top jazz pianists in the world” by the *Los Angeles Times* and “the most lyrical piano player of our time” by *Jazz Weekly*, Kenny Barron is one of the most renowned and busiest pianists in jazz today. A multiple-Grammy® nominee, Barron was honored with induction into the American Jazz Hall of Fame in 2005, and received the MAC Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005 and the Mid Atlantic Arts Living Legacy Award in 2009. Also in 2009, Barron was inducted as a Fellow in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an esteemed honorary society and center for independent policy research.

As a composer, arranger and bandleader, Barron has spent five decades at the forefront of the jazz piano aristocracy. An in-demand sideman in his early days on the jazz scene, the Philadelphia native launched his solo career in 1973 with *Sunset to Dawn*, released by Muse Records. He has recorded more than forty albums as a leader, including his latest, *The Traveler*, in 2008 on Universal France/Sunnyside.

Barron has led several iterations of his own bands over the years, serving as a lyrical mainstream maestro oftentimes to young musicians getting their starts in the jazz world. A professor of music at Rutgers University from 1973 to 2000, he has not only become a mentor to many of his students, but he has also found himself learning from them. Case in point: Barron's 2004 CD *Images*, partly based on a composition commissioned by the Wharton Center at Michigan State University, featured a quintet of impressive young musicians including vibraphonist Stefon Harris, flutist Anne Drummond, bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa and drummer Kim Thompson.

Over the years as a leader, Barron has not shied away from seeking out new experiences. In the early '80s, along with saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley, he co-founded the highly acclaimed collective Sphere, which celebrated the music of Thelonious Monk with its own spin on his songs, augmented by originals written by the band members. Sphere signed with Elektra Records, and released its first album, *Four for All*. When Rouse, Monk's saxophonist, died in 1988, Sphere went on hiatus. The band returned to action ten years later and released the critically heralded eponymous album on Verve in 1998, followed by a sold-out tour.

Other diverse musical quests Barron has embarked on include potent duo improvisations with violinist Regina Carter (2001's *Freefall*, nominated for a Grammy® in Best Jazz Instrumental Solo category), bassist Charlie Haden (1998's *Night & the City*, nominated for two Grammys: Best Jazz Album and Best Solo Instrumental), and percussionist Mino Cinelu (1996's *Swamp Sally*). In recent years, Barron's penchant to seek adventure led him to fully embrace Brazilian music, featured on his 2003 CD *Canta Brasil*. In 2004, he made his Carnegie Hall debut as a leader, and the next year New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center hosted a three-week Kenny Barron Festival. Also in 2005, Universal France/Sunnyside released *The Perfect Set: Live at Bradley's, Part Two*, following 2002's first set, *Live at Bradley's* on Universal France.

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