

Distinguished Achievement Citation

Abram Wilson

Class of 1995

With this presentation of Ohio Wesleyan's Distinguished Achievement Citation, the Ohio Wesleyan University Alumni Association Board of Directors is honored and privileged to recognize posthumously **Abram Wilson** as an inspiring educator, creative composer, and mesmerizing musician.

Through the warm, golden tones of his trumpet, the riveting rhythms contained in his compositions, and his personable and persuasive words, Abram effortlessly engaged, while simultaneously educating, audiences. He possessed a remarkable ability to convince audiences worldwide that jazz music matters.

As lively as his trumpet playing, Abram's vivacious passion for jazz was nurtured as a young student at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, whose alumni include Wynton Marsalis and Harry Connick Jr.. At the age of 17, Abram traveled north to attend Ohio Wesleyan University, where he had the opportunity to develop his talents as a classical trumpeter as well as earn a degree in Music Education. Abram continued his formal education by earning a master's degree at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

Abram moved to New York City and formed the Abram Wilson Quintet and Septet. He also performed with many well-known artists including the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the Roy Hargrove Big Band, and Ruth Brown. In 2002, Abram relocated to London and recorded his first album, "Jazz Warrior." The recognition of "Jazz Warrior" led to a commission from the Cheltenham Jazz Festival to create "Ride! Ferris Wheel to the Modern Day Delta." The innovative piece is a mix of blues, bebop, brass-band music, and hip-hop created with the underlying story of a jazz musician who escapes his musical roots for his dream of becoming a hip-hop celebrity. Abram's final recording with Dune Music, "Life Paintings," presents a more refined and mature sound, garnering for its composer the BBC Jazz Award for Best New CD and the BBC Jazz Award for Best Band.

Abram strongly believed in educating and inspiring others through his words. Between numbers during performances, he would narrate the history of New Orleans jazz. While traveling and performing in cities, Abram often performed at local schools and taught an introduction to jazz and a short lesson in improvisation to the schools' students. He had served as the Assistant Artistic Director for Tomorrow's Warrior, an education program created by Dune Music. Shortly before his premature death in June of 2012 at age 38 due to natural causes, Abram was appointed Turner Sims Professor at the University of Southampton and the first Jazzlines Associate Artist at Town Hall and Symphony Hall in Birmingham.

In the course of an accomplished albeit too-short lifetime, Abram established his mark on the music world as an educator and as a critically-acclaimed and award-winning musician, bandleader, and composer. For his professional achievements and dedication to jazz education, we applaud and recognize Abram Wilson with this Distinguished Achievement Citation.

May 16, 2015

