



To a Young Jazz Musician: Letters from the Road

By Wynton Marsalis, Selwyn Seyfu Hinds

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In *To a Young Jazz Musician*, the renowned jazz musician and Pulitzer Prize—winning composer Wynton Marsalis gives us an invaluable guide to making good music—and to leading a good life.

Writing from the road “between the bus ride, the sound check, and the gig,”

Marsalis passes on wisdom gained from experience, addressed to a young musician coming up—and to any of us at any stage of life. He writes that having humility is a way to continue to grow, to listen, and to learn; that patience is necessary for developing both technical proficiency and your own art rather than an imitation of someone else’s; and that rules are indispensable because “freedom lives in structure.”

He offers lessons learned from his years as a performer and from his great forebears Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and others; he explores the art of swing; he discusses why it is important to run toward your issues, not away; and he talks about what to do when your integrity runs up against the lack thereof in others and in our culture. He poetically expresses our need for healers: “All of it tracks back to how you heal your culture, one patient at a time, beginning with yourself.”

This is a unique book, in which a great artist offers his personal thoughts, both on jazz and on how to live a better, more original, productive, and meaningful life. *To a Young Jazz Musician* is sure to be treasured by readers young and old, musicians, lovers of music, and anyone interested in being mentored by one of America’s most influential, generous, and talented artists.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

America's foremost jazz classicist assesses the state of the art in this impassioned epistolary manifesto. Marsalis, now the artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, answers critics who denounce him as the "gatekeeper" for a fossilized middlebrow establishment with a spirited defense of standards against both post-bebop modernist abstraction and the contemporary trend toward promiscuous fusion with other pop styles. As conservator of the Armstrong-Ellington legacy, he champions a jazz grounded in melody, blues, romantic feeling and, above all, swing rhythm—a "democratic, quintessentially American concept" that "channels the spirit of the nation." He urges young musicians to take their art seriously through constant practice and a stern work ethic: "practicing is a sign of morality in a musician." Marsalis and amanuensis Hinds (*Gunshots in My Cook-Up*) sometimes sound like a motivational tape ("unleashing your personal power is the result of codifying... your own hard-earned objectives"), and their occasional mystic invocations of musical self-discovery and "the emotion of the sound" can confuse. Also, Marsalis's jazz traditionalism shades, at points, into a jeremiad about modern "decadence" and "corruption," inveighing against what he sees as our culture of absurdity, with its sexually precocious children and jeans-wearing jazz men. But musicians, aficionados and casual listeners alike will enjoy this lively polemic.

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From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

WYNTON MARSALIS was born in New Orleans, and went on to study at the Juilliard School of Music. He is now the artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. Marsalis has won nine Grammy awards in both jazz and classical categories. In 1987, Marsalis's oratorio on slavery and freedom, *Blood on the Fields*, became the first and, to date, only jazz composition to win the Pulitzer Prize in music.

SELWYN SEYFU HINDS is the former editor in chief of *The Source* magazine and is currently the

executive editor of Savoy magazine. He is the author of the memoir *Gunshots in My Cook-Up: Bits and Bites from a Hip-Hop Caribbean Life*, and his articles have appeared in Vanity Fair, Spin, Vibe, and other publications.

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Users Review

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