



SATURDAY, MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup> 2008 • SAMEDI LE 1<sup>ER</sup> MARS 2008  
TORONTO CENTRE FOR THE ARTS • CENTRE DES ARTS DE TORONTO

*Presented by BMO Nesbitt Burns*

## **JAZZ LEGENDS ADDED TO CANADIAN SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME 5<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GALA LINEUP**

(**Toronto – February XX**) - The Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala is excited to announce that it has today added two legends of the international jazz world to its already exciting lineup.

The addition of New Orleans icons **Ellis** and his son **Branford Marsalis** elevates the evening to new heights, as the duo perform in honour of Canadian jazz luminary, the late Oscar Peterson. Branford, a three-time Grammy Award winner and world-renowned saxophonist, will perform Peterson's *Wheatland* alongside his father Ellis, who is the premier jazz pianist in New Orleans. This performance will be the first time that the two have played *Wheatland* together in public. Ellis originally learned the composition in the early 1990's for his Canadian tour with the Ellis Marsalis Trio.

Branford Marsalis commented, "Oscar Peterson was and will always be a giant of Jazz. He redefined the genre and put it clearly on the radar of international audiences. His infectious and unique style encouraged young people to want to play and through this ability to attract and engage young musicians, he opened the door for so many great new talents. Both my father and I are delighted to be in Toronto to honour this legend."

"The gala is more than a concert, or an evening at the theatre. This event brings true Canadian and international icons together to celebrate and honour our nation's best – and this is what gives the event such a buzz and energy elevating each performance to a whole new level," said Peter Steinmetz, CSHF Chairman and Co-Executive Producer.

Broadcast partner CBC Radio Two will air a special interview with Paul Anka on Sunday, March 2 at 7pm, followed by the broadcast of the Gala at 8pm. In addition, CBC Radio One will air a one-hour special at 2pm and 10pm on March 3. CBC Television will broadcast an one-hour special on Monday, March 3 at 7pm featuring salutes to Paul Anka and Oscar Peterson.

Tickets are available via [ticketmaster.ca](http://ticketmaster.ca) or 416-870-8000 and can be purchased from as low as \$75.

*About CSHF Performers:*

**Branford Marsalis**

World-renowned saxophonist Branford Marsalis has won three Grammy Awards and continues to expand his skills as a composer and the head of Marsalis Music. Known for his innovative spirit and broad musical scope, Marsalis has performed at the greatest clubs and concert halls with his jazz quartet, performed as a guest soloist with numerous classical orchestras, and tested his own unique approach to contemporary popular music with his band Buckshot LeFonque. He is dedicated to reshaping the approach to jazz education, and is an active lecturer at many schools across the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast and Southwest. Marsalis has also spent two years recording and touring with Sting, served as the Musical Director for "The Tonight Show" for two years, has collaborated with the Grateful Dead and hosted National Public Radio's syndicated program *Jazz Set*.

**Ellis Marsalis**

Ellis Marsalis, often regarded as the premier modern jazz pianist in New Orleans, began studying clarinet at the age of 11, and by 13 was performing gigs with The Groovy Boys, playing tenor sax for the group. Marsalis went on to major in music at Dillard University in New Orleans, and shifted his focus to mastering the piano. After graduation he went on to record with the group Amer, a jazz quintet on the AFO label. While enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps he was a regular featured pianist on the television show "Dress Blues" and the radio show "Leatherneck Songbook." Between 1966 and 1974 Marsalis would perform at the Playboy Club (New Orleans), in the Al Hirt nightclub, Lu and Charles night club, and enter the teaching profession again as an adjunct professor at Xavier University (New Orleans). Marsalis later returned to the University of New Orleans to become the first occupant of the CocaCola endowed chair of Jazz Studies. He has appeared on "The Today Show," "The Tonite Show" and "Good Morning America," and continues to be active as a performing pianist leading his own group and has several recordings on the CBS-SONY label.

***About the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame:***

*The Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame (CSHF) /Le Panthéon des Auteurs et Compositeurs Canadiens is a collaboration of the Canadian Music Publishers Association (CMPA) and the Songwriters Association of Canada (S.A.C.) with the assistance of the Société professionnelle des auteurs et des compositeurs du Québec (SPACQ). The CSHF's generous founding contributors are: the Canadian Music Publishers Association (CMPA), EMI Music Canada, the Foundation Assisting Canadian Talent on Recordings (FACTOR), SOCAN, Sony BMG Music Canada, Universal Music Canada, and Warner Music Canada. The CSHF acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Music Fund for this project.*

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