



ARKANSAS JAZZ HERITAGE FOUNDATION / ARKANSAS JAZZ HALL OF FAME
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The Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Jazz Celebration is Monday 17 June 2024 at the Old State House Museum, 300 W Markham St, Little Rock, Arkansas. The evening will begin with a reception at 6 p.m. and Ceremony at 7 p.m.

2024 Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame Inductees

C. E. Askew

Tom Cox

Robert Ginsburg

David Higginbotham

Lester (Les) David Pack, Jr.

Benjamin L. Pruitt Sr.

I. J. Routen

Betty Ward

Claude “C. E.” Askew, Jr. was born in Brinkley, Arkansas, attended Brinkley High School (1967-1969) and graduated From Stuttgart High School in 1971, then received a bachelor’s degree from Henderson State University in 1989, and a Master’s in Jazz Studies from UA/Monticello in 2016. C. E. was the House Drummer for the Vapors Club from 1973-1977. From 1983-2004 he was the drummer for the prestigious United States Air Force Airmen of Note, featured on 42 national tours and seven international tours. During his tenure, the Airmen of Note was featured at the International Jazz Association Convention, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinics and the Percussive Arts Conventions. These are just a few of the vast number of performances. You name noted jazz performer and he has performed with them. C. E. served as percussion instructor at UA/Monticello from 2011-2018 and as director of the Master of Music in Jazz Studied program from 2016-2018. He is currently the drummer for the Clyde Pound Trio and the Stan Kenton Legacy Orchestra.



Tom Cox: Tom was born and raised in Little Rock, graduating from Hall High School in 1966. He graduated from the University of Indiana in 1970 then moved to Cleveland, OH where he received a master's degree in composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Tom performed in Ohio with the likes of Freddie Hubbard, Kenny Davis, Joe Lovano, and Cannonball Adderly. After returning to Little Rock in 1980, he worked with a variety of groups and musicians including Roseanne Vitro, James Leary, and Dave Rogers. Tom started the jazz studies program at UALR, where he was Director of Music Theory and Jazz Studies from ca. 1996-2001. Tom participated in numerous recordings in both Cleveland and Little Rock, his influences very eclectic, including an east India plus jazz mix. Notable students include Lee Tombouljian, Jonathan Pennington, Dave Higginbotham, and Dave Rogers. Tom also managed to squeeze in a master's degree in clinical social work at UALR in the mid-1990s.



Robert Ginsburg: Robert grew up in St. Louis and attended the University of Missouri in Columbia, migrating to Fayetteville in 1976. Three years later he started broadcasting his Friday night “Shades of Jazz” on station KUAF, which became the University of Arkansas’s NPR affiliate. Forty-four years later, it is their longest-running program. In 1992, Ginsburg founded the Northwest Arkansas Jazz Society and continues to serve as executive director. The same year he was named “jazz curator” by the Walton Arts Center where he started a subscription series for nationally touring artists, outreach often including workshops and master classes. In 1994 he started the NAJS Summer Jazz Series to showcase local and regional talent, which broadened to include an educational component, eventually funding scholarships for more than 80 students to attend the Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Camps. In 2016 Robert launched a “Jazz Education Initiative,” whose flagship program is the Northwest Arkansas Jazz All-Star Youth Ensemble, featuring clinicians and guest soloists of renown. The same year Robert was recipient of the Jazz Journalist Hero Award, meant to honor jazz advocates who have had a significant impact on their community. In 2011 he received the Arkansas Governor’s Award.



David Higginbotham: Dave was an army brat who moved to North Little Rock from Tennessee after his dad retired. He graduated from North Little Rock Northeast in 1976, then received a bachelor's degree from UA/Little Rock in 1983, and a Master's in Jazz Studies from UA/Monticello in 2019. Dave played bass in a rock band for several years until attending UALR, where he discovered classical music (including vocal) and jazz, eventually mentored in the art of jazz bass by Dave Rogers and Tom Cox. He says he learned more about how to play from four pianists than he did from any academic institution: after Tom Cox, Charles Thomas, Art Porter Sr., and John Puckett. Stylistic influences on bass: Oscar Pettiford and Dave Holland. Vocal Influences: Sarah Vaughan and Jon Hendricks. Dave has performed with the likes of Gary Gazaway and recorded with musicians as diverse as Bob Boyd, Pat Henry, and trombonist Sim Flora, as well as recordings under his own name: *This Is My Heart* (2007) and *Blues on the Corner* (2017). He enjoys adding his own lyrics to jazz standards and teaches music at Forest Park Elementary when he isn't playing gigs.



Lester (Les) David Pack, Jr.: Les Pack was born in Pine Bluff where he graduated from high school in 1978, completing his bachelor's degree at Henderson State University in 1983, where he studied with Dr. Earl Hesse. Les attended the Berklee College of Music in 1989, where he studied jazz guitar with Al Defino, followed by a master's degree at UA/Fayetteville in 1991, where he studied guitar and composition with Dr. James Greeson. Mr. Pack is currently a professor of music at the University of Arkansas/Monticello, where he teaches music theory, jazz band, as well as jazz guitar and bass. He has extensive credentials conducting/adjudicating in both Arkansas and Texas. Due to his activity composing and adjudicating for regional high school bands, he was inducted into the Four States Bandmaster's Hall of Fame in 2019. Les has performed with the Dave Rogers Trio at the Afterthought in Little Rock, as well as Clyde Pound at the Ohio Club in Hot Springs, and has been a regular at the Hot Springs Jazz Festival. Most of his compositions for solo, chamber ensemble, and band are available through Twin Towers Music Publishing, which he co-owns with Brian and Angela Rhodes.



Benjamin Leon Pruitt Sr. “Ben Pruitt Sr.” (Deceased 2017) was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1940, graduating from Horace Mann High School in 1957, receiving a bachelor’s degree from Arkansas AM&N College now the UA/Pine Bluff. He later earned a Master’s degree from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Ben began his career as a professional educator and musician in Magnolia, Arkansas, where he conducted award-winning bands for five years at Walker and Columbia High Schools. He relocated to Detroit in 1966, he directed Detroit Public Schools instrumental music ensembles at Wilson Junior High School (presently Phoenix Academy), Henry Ford High School and the prestigious, Cass Technical High School. Pruitt also served as Acting Fine Arts Department Head Henry Ford High School, and Fine Arts Department Head, at Cass Technical High School. The Cass Tech Jazz Ensemble, "CassJazz" appeared regularly at the Detroit International Jazz Festival. "CassJazz" was also selected by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Department of Education to perform for the international jazz artists: Frank Foster, Benny Golson, Marcus Roberts and Nancy Wilson at Detroit's Orchestra Hall. Ben was the leader of his own 21-piece jazz orchestra, "Ben's Friends". The orchestra performed regularly throughout the metro-Detroit area. He was also recognized by the Detroit Free Press as the Detroit Public Schools' "Mr. Holland", based upon the movie production “Mr. Holland’s Opus”. Ben was an honoree/performer for Art Porter Music Education, Inc in 2016.**Irma**



“I. J.” Routen was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, graduated from the University of Chicago Laboratory School in 1963, then attended Los Angeles City College in 1985 (AA-Music), then received a bachelor of music in composition from the University of Southern California in 1988. After returning to Little Rock, I. J. received a masters and doctorate in education from UA/Little Rock with a dissertation entitled “The Show Choir as an Agent of Change”. I. J. has performed as vocalist in London and Bradford, England, various cabarets in New York and Los Angeles in addition to various venues in Little Rock and Hot Springs. She has been a champion for “Show Choir” throughout her professional career. I. J. currently serves as the Fine Arts Coordinator for the Little Rock School District and director of Voices Without Borders, an elementary honor choir that specializes in Solid Gold music from the 60s and 70s by African American artists. Dr. Routen was inducted into the Arkansas Music Educators Association Hall of Fame in 2010 as a teacher and in 2017 as an administrator.



Betty Sue Chandler Ward: Betty Ward was born and raised in Arkansas. She graduated from Little Rock Central High School in 1956 then attended the University of Central Arkansas, eventually becoming an administrative assistant. Her primary instrument is piano, though she was a church organist throughout her teens. She is proficient in many styles though most associated with jazz, through her presence in such groups as The Swing Band of LRCHS, Swing Band Reunion, and the Betty Ward Combo. Stylistically she was influenced by Oscar Peterson, Stan Getz, Nancy Wilson, Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, and John Ward, evidenced by commercial recordings with The Ward Family Singers, John and Betty Ward, the Betty Ward Combo, plus her own *For All We Know* (2003), which included Jerry Williams, Bob Tanner, and Michael Murphy. Her first professional gig was with the Top Hatters at the Arkansas State Teachers College (now UCA). She performed in Branson, MO with the Barbara Fairchild Show and played at the Conway Country Club for 23 years. Betty founded the Swing Band Reunion from the original LRCHS Band and has remained its manager for the past 23 years.



The 2024 Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Jazz Celebration is Monday 17 June 2024 (6:00 p.m. reception and 7 p.m. program) at the Old State House Museum 300 W Markham St Little Rock, Arkansas. Inductees include C.E. Askew, Tom Cox, Robert Ginsburg, David Higginbotham, Lester (Les) David Pack, Jr., Benjamin L. Pruitt Sr., I. J. Routen, and Betty Ward. Music during the evening provided by The Swing Band Reunion, Skip Pruitt, Betty Ward Combo, I.J. Routen, David Higginbotham, Tom Cox, and C.E. Askew.

Reservations can be made online <https://square.link/u/RLdMkfXY> and are \$40 per person. Limited general admission seating will be available at the door.

For further information contact the Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation at 501.661.1604 or E-mail info@arjazz.org.

Special thank you for our bio sketches of the 2024 Inductees goes to Gerald Sloan (for Tom Cox, Robert Ginsburg, David Higginbotham, Lester (Les) David Pack, Jr., and Betty Ward) and Sterling Ingram (for C. E. Askew, Benjamin L Pruitt Sr., and I. J. Routen). Gerald Sloan and Sterling Ingram serve as Directors on the AJHF Board. This document revised 06/06/2024.



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Proceeds benefit The Old State House Society