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Celebrating
the Indomitable
American Spirit

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Ken Burns American Heritage Prize to be awarded to Wynton Marsalis
Presented by American Prairie Reserve in celebration of the indomitable American spirit

BOZEMAN, Mont. — American Prairie Reserve is proud to announce that **Wynton Marsalis**, has been named the recipient of the 2020 ***Ken Burns American Heritage Prize***. The award will be presented May 6, 2020, at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. The evening's festivities will include remarks by Ken Burns, Wynton Marsalis, Rosanne Cash, American Prairie Reserve Board Chair George E. Matelich, and American Prairie Reserve CEO Alison Fox.

Named in honor of America's most revered visual historian and filmmaker, the ***Ken Burns American Heritage Prize*** recognizes individuals whose achievements have advanced our collective understanding of America's heritage and the indomitable American spirit of our people. Nominees for the annual Prize consist of visionary artists, authors, educators, filmmakers, historians, and scientists. The candidates are chosen by a National Jury of distinguished leaders who represent communities across the country and share a common appreciation of America's heritage.

"It's a privilege to lend my name to a prize honoring individuals whose accomplishments reinforce the nation's understanding of all that is possible. And as one who has been irrevocably changed by the majesty of the American West, I am inspired by American Prairie Reserve's historic mission to return a vast swath of Montana to the spectacular natural beauty first enjoyed by Native Americans and later by Lewis and Clark. The Prize we will present together to Wynton Marsalis acknowledges the historic role that the Great Plains played in helping to shape America's character. It's that same character, courage, and fortitude that Wynton's tremendous work elucidates. This indomitable American spirit is alive and well today, in Wynton and in the men and women in many arenas whose work reminds us that our lives serve a greater purpose." — ***Ken Burns***

Wynton Marsalis is the Managing and Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC), which he helped found. Marsalis grew up in a musical household in New Orleans and studied classical trumpet at The Juilliard School in New York City, and pursued his love of jazz by joining Art Blakey's band. Aside from overseeing Jazz at Lincoln Center, Marsalis continues to perform, compose, and participate in educational workshops. Marsalis created the companion soundtrack recording to Ken Burns's documentary *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* and appeared in Burns's *Jazz* and *Country Music* documentaries. In addition to his musical talent, Marsalis has written six books.

"The momentum of folly leads us to embrace an intellectual and spiritual corrosion that confuses commerce with cultivation, remuneration with regeneration, and money with meaning. I love the term "rewilding" because it is at once innovation and conservation. American Prairie Reserve's rewilding of our nation's landscape reintroduces us to our natural instincts. Ken Burns's rewilding of our collective memory illuminates the hidden corners of our humanity. Jazz is a music that rewilds the soul with every listen. I am deeply appreciative to receive this prize from an institution I respect, bearing the name of a genius I admire and on behalf of a music that defines us at our best," said **Wynton Marsalis** upon being notified of his selection as the 2020 Prize recipient.

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American Prairie Reserve, which created the Prize, is a modern-day embodiment of America's optimistic and boundless approach to accomplishing the unprecedented – in this case, by creating the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, located on the Great Plains of northeastern Montana.

About American Prairie Reserve

[American Prairie Reserve's](#) mission is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America's heritage. When complete, the Reserve will be larger than Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks combined and support all the animals that historically called the Great Plains home, including bison, wolves, bears, elk, deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, swift foxes, upland birds including the greater sage grouse, birds of prey, and all manner of reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Already open to the public for recreation including camping, hunting, fishing, and birding, the Reserve offers visitors a once-in-a-lifetime, horizon-expanding opportunity to reconnect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at [americanprairie.org](#) and [kenburnsprize.com](#).

About Ken Burns

[Ken Burns](#) has been making documentary films for over forty years. Since the Academy Award-nominated *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981, Mr. Burns has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including *The Civil War*; *Baseball*; *Jazz*; *The Statue of Liberty*; *Huey Long*; *Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*; *Frank Lloyd Wright*; *Mark Twain*; *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*; *The War*; *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*; *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*; *Jackie Robinson*; *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War*; *The Vietnam War*; *The Mayo Clinic: Faith – Hope – Science*, , and, most recently, *Country Music*. His films have been honored with dozens of major awards, including sixteen Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards and two Oscar nominations; and in September of 2008, at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, Mr. Burns was honored by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

About Wynton Marsalis

Wynton Marsalis is a world-renowned trumpeter, bandleader and composer, and a leading advocate of American culture. He presently serves as Managing and Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center and Director of Jazz Studies at The Juilliard School. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1961, Marsalis began his classical training on trumpet at age 12, entered The Juilliard School at age 17, and soon thereafter joined Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers.

He made his recording debut in 1982 and has since recorded more than 80 jazz and classical recordings, which have won nine GRAMMY Awards® and sold over 7 million copies worldwide. In 1983, he became the first and only artist to win both classical and jazz GRAMMYs® in the same year, repeating the distinction the following year. Today, Wynton is the only artist ever to win GRAMMY Awards® in five consecutive years (1983-1987). In 1997, Wynton became the first jazz artist to be awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in Music for his oratorio *Blood on the Fields*. He has been celebrated at home and abroad with the National Medal of Arts, the United Nations' Messenger of Peace award, Britain's Royal Academy of Music Honorary Membership, and the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor from France. Marsalis' vision and passionate leadership enabled the construction of Jazz at Lincoln Center's home—Frederick P. Rose Hall—the first education, performance, and broadcast facility devoted to jazz.

Wynton Marsalis' core beliefs and foundation for living are based on the principals of jazz. He promotes individual creativity (improvisation), collective cooperation (swing), gratitude and good manners (sophistication), and faces adversity with persistent optimism (the blues). Through his selfless work, Marsalis has elevated the quality of human engagement for individuals, social networks, and cultural institutions throughout the world. When you hear Marsalis play, you're hearing life being played out through music.

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