

# Now We're 15: NEJA Votes Five New Members into Hall of Fame

BOSTON (April 10, 2004) -- In an evening of heartfelt tributes and stirring, swinging music, the New England Jazz Alliance added five inductees into its New England Jazz Hall of Fame -- Ruby Braff, Ralph Burns, Gigi Gryce, Boots Mussulli and Nat Pierce. The April 9 ceremony brought family members, old friends, and fans together in celebration at Berklee College of Music's David Friend Recital Hall.

As was the case in 2001, NEJA's college of voters consisted of many of the most knowledgeable musicians and observers of the New England jazz scene, and, once again, those chosen for the Hall of Fame were some of the finest artists in the entire world of jazz. All are deceased.

The event included musical tributes to the five, as well as to the late Vinnie Haynes, whom NEJA recognized with its second "Unsung Hero" award. Receiving the plaque and a copy of the photo of Haynes that will become part of NEJA's Hall of Fame exhibit were Haynes' wife, Mildred; his son, Kenneth; daughter, Crystal; niece, Leslie Gilmore; nephew Craig Haynes; grandson Taylor; and goddaughter, Christine Sloane.

Also attending were Mussulli's daughters, Marcia Marcello, Rina Fairbanks and Janice Martino.

Those providing the musical tributes to Haynes and the new Hall inductees included guitarist Jon Wheatley, pianists Chris Taylor and John Kordalewski, bassists Ron Mahdi and Steve Neil, drummers Bob Tamagni, Ron Savage and Bobby Ward, tenor sax man Andy McGhee, trombonists Phil Wilson and Tony Lada, and trumpeter Phil Person.

Also given special recognition for providing decades of outstanding performances as a pianist and entertainer at the Pioneer Club and other Boston venues was Mabel Robinson Simms, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday. According to NEJA vice president Charles Burton Walker, Ms. Robinson is still vice president of the Musicians Local 535 Reunion Committee, which was formed to carry on traditions of the union that represented Boston's jazz musicians from the 1930s through 1970.

NEJA's new Hall of Fame exhibit, which now features photo and biographical displays of 15 inductees, was unveiled at Boston's Tremont Theater and will be on display at the Williamstown (Mass.) Jazz Festival on April 23-24 and at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven from May 6-25.



*Jon Wheatley recounted his experiences playing with Ruby Braff in his tribute. (Photo by Barbara Bishop © 2004.)*



*From left to right: Andy McGhee, Gloria Belastock, Brent*



*JRon Mahdi was on the bandstand for tributes to Gigi Gryce*

*Banulis, Ted Belastock, and Phil Wilson celebrate the new members of the Hall of Fame. (Photo by Barbara Bishop © 2004.)*



*and Ruby Braff. (Photo by Barbara Bishop © 2004.)*



*Trombonist Tony Lada (left) and drummer Bobby Tamagni dedicated their performance to their Milford mentor, Boots Mussulli. Both were members of Mussulli's Greater Milford Youth Orchestra. (Photo by Barbara Bishop © 2004.)*

*NEJA Treasurer Bob Eshback and Board Member Mae Arnette between sets at Berklee. (Photo by Barbara Bishop © 2004.)*



*NEJA's Rose Marie White shares a "cooling off" period with bassist Steve Neil (left) and drummer Bobby Ward. (Photo by Barbara Bishop © 2004.)*

*Phil Wilson and Al Vega after Wilson's unaccompanied tribute to Ralph Burns. (Photo by Barbara Bishop © 2004.)*