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Commencement 2015

April 8, 2015

NEC Announces 2015 Honorary Degree Recipients, Commencement Speaker

Jazz Pianist and Leader Ahmad Jamal, Violinist Kyung Wha Chung, and Pianist Russell Sherman to Receive Degrees

Sherman, Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at NEC, to Give Commencement Address

Annual Exercises to be Held May 17, 2015 in NEC's Jordan Hall

New England Conservatory will bestow honorary Doctor of Music (hon. D.M.) degrees on three distinguished musicians at its 144th annual Commencement Exercises, Sunday, May 17 at 3 p.m. in NEC's Jordan Hall. The recipients are jazz pianist and leader **Ahmad Jamal**, violinist **Kyung Wha Chung**, and pianist **Russell Sherman**. NEC's Distinguished Artist-in-Residence who recently celebrated his 85th birthday with an all-Beethoven recital, Sherman will give the Commencement address.

In addition, approximately 245 graduating students in the class of 2015 will be awarded degrees and diplomas including the Bachelor of Music, Graduate Diploma, Master of Music, Doctor of Musical Arts, and Artist Diploma. Other speakers will include President Tony Woodcock, Provost Thomas Novak, and a student speaker to be announced.

The Exercises are free and open to the public.

Biographies of the Honorees

Kyung Wha Chung

In a career that has already spanned more than thirty years, violinist Kyung Wha Chung has been one of the most sought after musicians on the international stage. She has earned recognition worldwide as a performing artist of the very highest stature: in 1972 the South Korean government awarded Kyung Wha Chung its highest honor, the medal of Civil Merit and she has been cited by the Sunday Times of London as one of the most important contributors to the British cultural scene. The depth of her musicianship, her commitment and her passion for her art characterize each performance and recording.

Kyung Wha Chung was born into a musical family in South Korea and began studying the violin at age six. At the age of twelve she left her native country to study with Ivan Galamian at the Juilliard School in New York; she was coached further by Joseph Szigeti and Szymon Goldberg. After winning the Leventritt competition in 1967 (she was co-winner with Pinchas Zukerman), she embarked upon her career in North America, appearing with many of the world's finest orchestras. She made her sensational European debut in 1970 at the Royal Festival Hall with André Previn and the London Symphony Orchestra, playing the Tchaikovsky *Concerto*. Kyung Wha Chung has appeared regularly as a soloist with the world's most prestigious orchestras, working with conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle, André Previn, Bernard Haitink, Riccardo Muti and the late Sir Georg Solti.

As a recitalist, Kyung Wha Chung has collaborated with an extraordinary list of important artists, including Radu Lupu, Krystian Zimerman, Peter Frankl, and Stephen Kovacevich. Chamber music plays a very important part in Kyung Wha Chung's performing life, and she has toured extensively as a member of the Chung Trio, with her brother conductor/pianist Myung-Whun Chung and her sister, cellist Myung-Wha Chung.



The violinist has recorded numerous award winning albums. After her 1970 Decca Tchaikovsky & Sibelius violin concertos, she produced over thirty-two albums with RCA, Deutsche Grammophon, and EMI. Of those, her recordings of the Strauss & Respighi violin sonatas with Krystian Zimerman (1989, DG label), Bartok: *Violin Concerto No. 2; Rhapsody* with Simon Rattle (1994, EMI) have earned her the Grammmophon award.

In 1997, she celebrated the 30th anniversary of her international debut at the Barbican Centre in London and in her hometown of Seoul, Korea. In 2008, illness and injury caused her to halt her performing career temporarily. In 2011-12, she resumed performances in Korea and in December 2014, made a comeback performance in London at the Royal Festival Hall.

She is currently a professor at the Juilliard School of Music and is the co-artistic director of the Great Mountain Music Festival. In May 2012, Kyung Wha Chung was appointed chair-professor of music at Ewha University.

Ahmad Jamal

Celebrated pianist-composer Ahmad Jamal continues his performance schedule at home in the U.S. and around the world, as he has for the last seven decades. Noted for his outstanding technical command and identifiable sound as a piano stylist, Jamal was born on July 2, 1930, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A child prodigy who began to play the piano at the age of three, he began formal studies at age seven. While in high school, he completed the equivalent of college master classes under the noted African-American concert singer and teacher Mary Cardwell Dawson and pianist James Miller. He joined the musicians' union at the age of 14, and he began touring upon graduation from Westinghouse High School at the age of 17, drawing critical acclaim for his solos. In 1951 he formed his first trio, The Three Strings. Record Producer John Hammond "discovered" The Three Strings performing at New York's The Embers Club, and signed them to Okeh Records when this imprint was revived as a base for jazz and R&B releases under the Columbia (now Sony) umbrella.



Working as the "house trio" at Chicago's Pershing Hotel in 1958, Jamal, with bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Vernell Fournier, made an on-location recording for Argo (Chess) Records entitled *But Not For Me*. The resulting hit single and album, which also included *Poinciana*—now Jamal's trademark—remained on the Top 10 Best-Selling charts for an unprecedented 108 weeks. The resulting financial success enabled Jamal to realize a dream, and he opened a restaurant/club, The Alhambra, in Chicago. Here the trio was able to perform while limiting their touring schedule.

Although Jamal performs in many configurations and with many other jazz artists, the solo and trio formats form the core of his work. Following his Crosby/Fournier configuration, his trio with bassist Jamil Nasser and drummer Frank Gant dominated his large recorded output, as well as concert dates, from the mid-1960s to the mid-'70s. His current quartet is with bassist Reginald Veal, drummer Herlin Riley, and percussionist Manolo Badrena.

Considering his trio "an orchestra," Jamal not only achieves a unified sound, but subtly inserts independent roles for the bass and drums. The hallmarks of Jamal's style are rhythmic innovations, colorful harmonic perceptions, especially left hand harmonic and melodic figures, plus parallel and contrary motion lines in and out of chordal substitutions and alterations and pedal point ostinato interludes in tasteful dynamics. He also incorporates a unique sense of space in his music, and his musical concepts are exciting without being loud in volume. Augmented by a selection of unusual standards and his own compositions, Jamal would notably impress and influence, among others, trumpeter Miles Davis.

In 1970, Jamal performed "M.A.S.H. Theme (Suicide Is Painless)," the title composition by Johnny Mandel for the soundtrack of the film *M*A*S*H* and in 1995, two tracks from his smash album *But Not For Me—Music, Music, Music*, and *Poinciana* were featured in the Clint Eastwood film *The Bridges of Madison County*.

In 1994, Jamal received the American Jazz Masters fellowship award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The same year he was named a Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale University, where he performed commissioned works with the Assai String Quartet.

In June of 2007 the French Government inducted Jamal into the prestigious l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Former recipients being William Faulkner, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jackson Pollock, Ella Fitzgerald, Alan Ginsberg and Toni Morrison.

Ahmad Jamal's music remains youthful, fresh, imaginative and always influential. His most recent recording, from 2014, is a two-CD-plus-DVD live set with flutist Yusef Lateef from the Olympia theatre in Paris. His 2008 recording *It's Magic* hit the charts at No. 13 immediately after its release in the U.S., being touted as one of his finest works yet to date. Hailed by critics as a career highlight, the album graced the Billboard Top Jazz Albums chart, the iTunes Jazz Top 10, and peaked at No. 2 on the Jazz Week Radio Chart In France. Jamal was awarded Best International Album (Album International de Production Francaise) by Les Victoires du Jazz, the French equivalent of the Grammys.

The album also garnered Record of the Year from *Jazz Man* magazine.

Russell Sherman

Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at NEC, pianist Russell Sherman is an eloquent communicator both on and off the concert stage, one of Boston's musical treasures, a legendary pianist who continues to garner accolades from critics and audiences alike for his musical insight, imagination, and poetry. The *New York Times* calls him "one of the best pianists in this or any other country." As the author of a highly acclaimed book *Piano Pieces* (a rhapsodic compilation of vignettes and personal anecdotes from Sherman's life experiences as a pianist and teacher), he has been praised not only as an ingenious virtuoso but also as an insightful master.



Sherman has performed with such major orchestras as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's (with whom he performed the five Beethoven concertos), Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, and the San Francisco Symphony. Abroad, Sherman has played in the major cities of Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Russia, Korea, China, and South America.

In recital, Russell Sherman has appeared on Carnegie Hall's Keyboard Virtuoso Series, California's Ambassador Foundation Series, the Distinguished Artists Series at New York's Tisch Center for the Arts at the 92nd Street Y, and the Bank of Boston Celebrity Series. He has performed at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Sarasota's Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Jordan Hall, Columbia University's Miller Theater, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Chicago's Orchestra Hall. Additionally, he has appeared at the Ravinia Festival, the Hollywood Bowl, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the Wolf Trap Festival, as well as recitals at Spain's Santander Festival and Germany's Ruhr Triennale Festival. In 2010, he collaborated with Mark Morris Dance Group and the Orchestra of Emmanuel Music in the Boston premiere of Mozart Dances, presented by Celebrity Series of Boston.

Sherman is a prolific recording artist. He has recorded the five Beethoven concertos with the Czech Philharmonic and the Monadnock Festival Orchestra, and the complete Beethoven sonatas on GM Records produced by Gunther Schuller. The entire Beethoven sonatas project has been called "a set for the ages" by Bernard Jacobson in *Fantare*. This makes Sherman the first American pianist to have recorded all of the sonatas and concertos of Beethoven. His earlier recording of Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* was critically acclaimed: Anthony Tommasini in a 1999 *New York Times* piece said, "Several impressive recordings of Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* prove that these audaciously difficult works are actually playable and triumphantly pianistic. But none make Liszt's visionary understanding of what the piano could do more palpable and exciting than Russell Sherman's extraordinary 1990 recording."

Sherman has also recorded *Premieres & Commissions*, in which he performs contemporary repertoire by Schoenberg, Schuller, Helps, Perle, and Shapey. Except for Schoenberg's *Six Piano Pieces*, he personally premiered and commissioned all of these works. Sherman's releases on Avie Records include a CD of Debussy's *Estampes*, *Images Book II* and *Préludes Book II*, a DVD of his live performance of the Liszt *Etudes d'exécution transcendante*, and most recently, the complete Chopin *Mazurkas*.

Russell Sherman was born in 1930 and educated in New York, beginning piano studies at age six. By age eleven, Sherman was studying with Eduard Steuermann, a pupil and friend of Ferruccio Busoni and Arnold Schoenberg. Sherman graduated from Columbia University at age nineteen with a degree in the humanities.

Teaching at NEC since 1967, he has also served as a Visiting Professor at Harvard University.

For further information, check the [NEC Website](#) call the NEC Concert Line at 617-585-1122. NEC's Jordan Hall, Brown Hall, Williams Hall and the Keller Room are located at 30 Gainsborough St., corner of Huntington Ave. Pierce Hall is located at 241 St. Botolph St. between Gainsborough and Mass Ave.

ABOUT NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

A cultural icon approaching its 150th anniversary in 2017, New England Conservatory (NEC) is recognized worldwide as a leader among music schools. Located in Boston, Massachusetts, on the Avenue of the Arts in the Fenway Cultural District, NEC offers rigorous training in an intimate, nurturing community to undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate music students from around the world. Its faculty of 225 boasts internationally esteemed artist-teachers and scholars. NEC alumni go on to fill orchestra chairs, concert hall stages, jazz clubs, recording studios, and arts management positions worldwide. Half of the Boston Symphony Orchestra is composed of NEC-trained musicians and faculty.

NEC is the oldest independent school of music in the United States. Founded in 1867 by Eben Tourjee, an American music educator, choral conductor and organist, its curriculum is remarkable for its wide range of styles and traditions. On the college level, NEC features training in classical, jazz, and Contemporary Improvisation. Graduate and post-graduate programs supplement these core disciplines with orchestral conducting and professional chamber music training. Additional programs, such as the Sistema Fellows, a professional training program for top postgraduate musicians and music educators that creates careers connected to music, youth, and social change, and Entrepreneurial Musicianship, a cutting-edge program integrating professional and personal skills development into the musical training of students to better develop the skills and knowledge needed to create one's own musical opportunities, also enhance the NEC experience.

Through its Preparatory School, School of Continuing Education, and Community Programs and Partnerships Program, the Conservatory provides training and performance opportunities for children, pre-college students, and adults. Through its outreach projects, it allows young musicians to engage with non-traditional audiences in schools, hospitals, and nursing homes—thereby bringing pleasure to new listeners and enlarging the universe for classical music, jazz, and Contemporary Improvisation. Currently more than 750 young artists from 46 states and 39 foreign countries attend NEC on the college level; 1,400 young students attend on the Preparatory level; and 325 adults participate in the Continuing Education program.

The only conservatory in the United States designated a National Historic Landmark, NEC presents more than 900 free concerts each year. Many of these take place in Jordan Hall (which shares National Historic Landmark status with the school), world-renowned for its superb acoustics and beautifully restored interior. In addition to Jordan Hall, more than a dozen performance spaces of various sizes and configurations are utilized to meet the requirements of the unique range of music performed at NEC, from solo recitals to chamber music to orchestral programs to big band jazz, Contemporary Improvisation, and opera scenes. Every year, NEC's opera studies department also presents two fully staged opera productions at the Cutler Majestic Theatre or Paramount Center in Boston, and a semi-staged performance in Jordan Hall. This season, the operas produced have been Menotti's *The Consul*, Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

NEC is co-founder and educational partner of *From the Top*, a weekly radio program that celebrates outstanding young classical musicians from the entire country. With its broadcast home in Jordan Hall, the show is now carried by National Public Radio and is heard on 250 stations throughout the United States.

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