

Willard Jenkins Biography

Willard Jenkins is an independent arts consultant & producer, and writer under his Open Sky banner. Willard Jenkins' current activity includes concert, festival, and concert series planning/development, artistic direction, consulting, music journalism, teaching, and broadcast work.

Arts Administrator

From March 1989-November 1994, Jenkins was executive director of the **National Jazz Service Organization (NJSO)** in Washington, DC. During his NJSO tenure Jenkins directed every NJSO operation, including technical assistance & re-granting programs, publication services, and supervised a professional staff. In 1990 Jenkins was an architect of the pioneering **Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest National Jazz Network** (receiving an unprecedented - for jazz -- initial funding allocation of \$3.4M), a network of presenting organizations and regional arts organizations.

Willard Jenkins is a **successful fundraiser**, securing or assisting in grant allocations from numerous public and private sources. These have included: the **National Endowment for the Arts**; numerous **local, state, and regional arts agencies**; **Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund**; **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**; **AT&T Foundation**; **Ford Foundation**; **Pew Charitable Trusts**; **Jim Beam Brands**; **Cleveland Foundation**; **Gund Foundation**; **Kulas Foundation**, etc.

In 1983 Jenkins conducted a regional needs assessment/research and feasibility study of the jazz art form in the Midwest, which led to the development of the nation's first regional jazz service program, at **Arts Midwest in Minneapolis, MN**. While at Arts Midwest (1984-89) he developed the first regional jazz database, and wrote a series of how-to technical assistance booklets for musicians, presenters, educators, and organizations.

Writer/Journalist

Jenkins commenced his writing career with the Cleveland Plain Dealer in the early 1970s. He has subsequently contributed to local, regional, national, and international publications with contributions appearing in *Jazz Times*, *Inside Arts*, *Down Beat*, *Schwann Spectrum*, *Schwann Opus*, *Jazz Report*, *Jazz*

Forum, The Antioch Review, Attache, Jazz Education Journal, All About Jazz, and numerous other publications. Jenkins' new media contributions have appeared in Amazon.com, NPRJazz.org, NetNoir.com, Impact247.com, and Africana.com; additionally he writes and edits his own blog The Independent Ear on his web site: www.openskyjazz.com. He has been editor of several publications, including NJSO Journal, and *Lost Jazz Shrines*. Jenkins is an experienced and skilled interviewer whose work has also included conducting extensive oral history interviews for the Smithsonian Institution, the Rhythm & Blues Foundation, and 651Arts. Jenkins is also collaborating with NEA Jazz Master Randy Weston on his memoirs African Rhythms, to be published by Duke University Press in 2009.

Educator

From 1979-1984 Jenkins taught jazz history at Cleveland State University. Since 2005 he has taught the online course **Jazz Imagines Africa for Kent State University**. He has contributed educational content to the International Association for Jazz Education website and to the Thelonious Monk Institute's Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org).

Broadcaster

Since relocating temporarily to the New Orleans area in October, 2007 Willard Jenkins has been a volunteer radio programmer in several different music formats at radio station **WWOZ**.

Prior to that affiliation Jenkins has been a public & community station radio broadcaster and producer in Cleveland, OH; Minneapolis, MN; and since 1989 at **WPFW**, Pacifica Radio in Washington, DC. He has also contributed to **XM Satellite Radio**, and **National Public Radio**, where he has written documentary scripts, including for the Louis Armstrong centennial radio series. In 1994 Jenkins became affiliated with **Black Entertainment Television**, commencing with creative consultation on its jazz programs. Since that time he has hosted, associate produced, produced, and written numerous series, specials, and documentaries for the BET Jazz and BET J channels.

Consultant

Jenkins is a successful and widely recognized workshop, symposium, conference facilitator, and speaker at universities, conventions, and arts conferences across the country and internationally. He has **facilitated long-range planning processes and written subsequent long-range plans for the Cleveland Orchestra, Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz, and the Cleveland Education Fund.** Jenkins has served on arts granting panels at the federal, regional, state, local and private foundation level.

Jenkins serves as **coordinator of the performance component of the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters program.**

In 2008 Jenkins began a consulting relationship with the **National Spinal Cord Injury Association.**

Artistic Director

Jenkins' work in concert and festival production, and artistic direction began in 1979 with the Northeast Ohio Jazz Society. In 1995 Jenkins was appointed artistic director of the annual **Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland.** His presenting and artistic direction work has also included such clients as the **Smithsonian Institution and Harlem Stage/Aaron Davis Hall.** He also serves as **artistic director of two annual concert series at Tribeca Performing Arts Center (New York, NY): Lost Jazz Shrines (Spring) and Jazz-in-Progress (Fall young artist series),** and as **artistic director of the annual BeanTown Jazz Festival in Boston, Ma,** produced by Berklee College of Music.

Jenkins was the editor and coordinator of the national Lost Jazz Shrines project which encompassed presenting organizations around the country in celebration of historic jazz venues in their community. The series at Tribeca Performing Arts Center has ranged from such historic jazz venues as Café Society, The Five Spot, Café Bohemia, Slugs, and the loft jazz scene in Lower Manhattan.

Willard Jenkins is a 1973 graduate of Kent State University (Kent, OH) with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology.