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Jazz Great Clark Terry Will Receive Pettee Medal

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UNH Alumni Association
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DURHAM, N.H. -- Jazz legend Clark Terry will add to his lengthening list of illustrious awards this month when he comes to Durham to receive the Charles Holmes Pettee Medal, the University of New Hampshire Alumni Association's highest honor.

The Pettee Medal will be presented in a ceremony on March 25 at the Memorial Union Building. The award is given in recognition of outstanding accomplishment and distinguished service to the state, nation or world.

While Terry made his name as a musician, playing with Count Basie and Duke Ellington and on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show," he has also gained renown as an educator.

"A good part of his life has been devoted to, as he calls it, 'passing on the language,'" said Paul Verrette, UNH music professor emeritus. "He was one of the first jazz luminaries who learned in the trenches, so to speak, who saw the need to try to develop an educational format so they could pass the language on. Popular music was changing, and to preserve the language, he could see that people like himself should be passing it on through schools. It's coming direct from the horse's mouth."

Terry's relationship with the university, begun and nurtured by UNH music professor and clarinetist David Seiler, stretches back nearly three decades. Seiler started a jazz festival in 1974 and soon afterwards landed Terry as a headliner. Thus began a long and fruitful relationship.

In 1978, Terry received an honorary doctorate from UNH. In 1998, he was named adjunct professor of music. He comes to campus for short residencies, usually twice each year.

Terry celebrated both his 70th and 80th birthdays with concerts at UNH.

In 2000, David King, a 1978 UNH graduate, established an endowment for the "perpetuation of the jazz language" to bring musicians and scholars of exceptional reputation to UNH. The fund was named for Terry and Seiler.

Terry who plays both trumpet and flugelhorn, will arrive in Durham on Friday, March 22, and work with 1,500 young jazz musicians from around New England at the Clark Terry/UNH Jazz Festival the next day.

A concert featuring Terry and several of his colleagues and the UNH Jazz Band will be held Sunday, March 24, at 8 p.m. in the Johnson Theatre of the Paul Creative Arts Center. Tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, bassist Ray Brown, pianist James Williams and drummer Les Harris Jr. will make up the Clark Terry Quintet.

There will also be a performance at the Pettee Medal ceremony, scheduled for 3:30 p.m. on March 25.

For more information on the Pettee Medal ceremony, call 603-862-2040.

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