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Jazz great Billy Taylor comes to Missoula

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NEWS RELEASE

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JAZZ GREAT BILLY TAYLOR COMES TO MISSOULA

MISSOULA--

The foremost jazz educator of our time will present the fifth installment in the President's Lecture Series 1999-2000 at The University of Montana.

Billy Taylor will discuss "Jazz as a Metaphor for Democracy," illustrated with selections from his jazz repertoire, on Tuesday, Feb. 1, in the University Theatre. The performance begins at 8 p.m. and is open to the public at no charge.

The lecture will be followed with a concert by the Billy Taylor Trio on Wednesday, Feb. 2, in the University Theatre. The show begins at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$16 for students; \$17 for senior citizens, faculty and staff; and \$18 for the general public. Tickets may be purchased at Tic-It-E-Z outlets or by calling (888) 842-4830.

Taylor also will present a seminar, "Reflections on a Career in Jazz," at 2:10 p.m. Tuesday in the Music Recital Hall. For more information, call (406) 243-6880.

Taylor's visit is in conjunction with the "The Jazz Age in Paris: 1914-1940," a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit that will visit Missoula Feb. 10-March 23. The historical exhibit will be on display in the lower level of the Missoula Public Library, while a series of related events -- including lectures, concerts and other performances -- takes place throughout Missoula. Schedule brochures are available at the public library and at UM's Mansfield Library.

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With more than 50 years in the field, Taylor has the distinction of living through the history of the jazz that he plays and teaches. He is renowned as a jazz pianist, composer, author, professor and broadcast personality.

"He comes off as a genial professor, though one who has played with all the significant musicians of what is now the jazz mainstream," wrote Ben Ratliff in The New York Times.

In the 1940s and early '50s, he performed with legends like Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie. Since then he has performed primarily as leader of his own trios, including the current Billy Taylor Trio with bassist Chip Jackson and drummer Steve Johns. Taylor has some 300 songs to his credit.

"Pianist Billy Taylor can play any style of jazz with near-perfection ...," wrote Al Hunter Jr. in the Philadelphia Daily News. "Technically, Taylor is a wizard."

A scholar as well as a musician, Taylor earned his doctorate from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst before joining the faculty there, where he holds the Wilber D. Barrett Chair of Music. He also has been appointed a Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale University and holds 19 degrees.

"Just because you have a doctorate doesn't mean you can't swing," wrote Michael J. Renner in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. "And for 52 years, pianist Dr. Billy Taylor has swung, has educated and has been the ambassador for the jazz world."

In the late 1940s Taylor published the first book ever written on bebop piano, and since then has written more than a dozen other books, as well as articles and feature stories. His most recent book is "Jazz Piano: A Jazz History."

Since 1994, Taylor has been artistic adviser for jazz at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. He is host of the National Public Radio show, "Billy Taylor's Jazz at the Kennedy Center," his latest venture in a 20-year public radio career. He

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also is on-air arts correspondent for the CBS program "Sunday Morning," for which he won an Emmy Award. He has received many other honors, including two Peabody Awards, a Grammy nomination and the National Medal of Arts. At age 78, Taylor is going strong as ever. He released three albums in 1999 -- "Ten Fingers, One Voice," "Billy Taylor at Town Hall" and "Easy Like" -- bringing his total number of albums to more than 50.

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