



James Tatum - Biography

President & Founder of the James Tatum Foundation for the Arts, Inc.



James Tatum was born in Mineola, Texas, in a home that encouraged him to play the piano. He was educated receiving both a Bachelor of Arts degree from Prairie View A & M University and a Master's degree in Music from the University of Michigan. After receiving his degrees, he moved to Detroit and was hired as a teacher in the Music & Fine Arts Department in the Detroit Public School System and became a department head at Murray Wright High School.

Mr. Tatum became involved with music and jazz education in the Detroit public schools, local colleges and universities including Wayne County Community College District, Oakland University, Oakland Community College, and Macomb Community College. He was recognized for his mastery and became a member of several leading music organizations; the International Association of Jazz Educators, the National Committee of the Black Jazz Caucus, the Music Educators National Conference, and the International American Federation of Musicians.

Mr. Tatum dedicated his life to the arts and has been an educator, jazz pianist, composer, a music lecturer, a philanthropist and a patron of the arts. He is distinguished in the world of classical music education and jazz.

In his role as educator and lecturer he presents a variety of music subjects in a lecturer format including "The History of Jazz," "How to Listen to Jazz," and "Elements and Improvisation of Jazz Expressions." Tatum has composed many compositions: "Contemporary Jazz Mass," "Jubilee Jazz Suite," "The Return of Joshua," "Great Detroit Renaissance" and many others. His CD recording called "A Tribute to Nelson Mandela" was released in 2013.

Twenty nine years ago, James Tatum founded the James Tatum Foundation for the Arts, Inc. when he was divinely guided to create a way to help talented youth pursue their dreams. As part of the foundation, he created the following programs; the Scholarship Program, the Jazz Lecture Performance Program, the Give-A-Toot Program, the Annual Classical/Jazz Concert, and the Volunteer Recognition Awards Ceremony. He has diligently worked to keep his vision alive for decades by providing scholarships to talented youth in the arts. To date, the foundation has given over \$377,000 in scholarships to over 500 graduating local and metropolitan area high school students. Over 95% of past James Tatum Foundation for the Arts recipients have received their college degrees.

From 2004 to 2006, Tatum was a weekly talk show host of *Tune into Artistry* on WDTR-FM 90.9 FM. In 2005, Tatum was the first jazz musician to receive the *People Choice Michigan Artist Award* presented by the Governor of Michigan Jennifer Granholm and sponsored by Arts Serve of Michigan. And, in 2006, James Tatum Trio Plus performed on Wayne State University's WDET.FM National Public Radio *Destination Jazz Show*, hosted by Ed Love. He has also performed with jazz legend Billy Taylor and many others at the 21st Annual Jazz Forum and Concert hosted by Honorable John Conyers, Jr. in Washington, D.C. on September 22, 2005.

In 2009, he was interviewed on National CNN Headlines Newsmaker. In the same year he was inducted into the First Historical Museum in his hometown of Mineola, Texas. The Mayor, City Council, Museum Board of Director and many civic leaders honored Mr. Tatum. His memoirs of his lifetime achievements are on display.

In 2010, Tatum received the highest Humanitarian Award from the University President Dr. George C. Wright of the Prairie View A & M University, because of his distinguished alumnus.

In 2012, James Tatum was honored twice. He was invited to Grenada, West Indies to perform in a Jazz Lecture Performance Celebration Festival, sponsored by the U. S. Embassy and Grenada Music Film Industry. Tatum shared the Jazz Education performance with a wide audience on two television stations. Thousands of Grenadians were able to see James Tatum perform and lecture on a special 30-minute show. Mr. Tatum received the Spirit of Detroit Award given to the James Tatum Foundation by the Mayor and City Council of Detroit.

In 2015, Mr. Tatum performed at the Tuesday Musicale of Detroit Second Annual Classical to Jazz Concert at the Congregational Church of Birmingham in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He also signed a five-year contract with Jazzman Records LTD of London UK, reissuing two of his LP recordings: "The Contemporary Jazz Mass" (74) and the "Spiritualotta Jazz Suite (81).

In 2017, Mineola, Texas, Mayor Kevin White presented James Tatum with a Proclamation Plaque certifying July 6 as James Tatum Day. Congrats!!!!