

BENNINGTON SUMMERS

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BENNINGTON SUMMERS, INC.

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*OAS file:
Bennington Summers*

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BENNINGTON SUMMERS* is committed to the exploration and illumination of the performing and visual arts, seeking the "centers of energy" that influence and inform them. The project will make non-term-time use of the total facilities of Bennington College, including the exceptional new arts complex.

A number of criteria were established for the design of BENNINGTON SUMMERS. It was agreed that its projects must, of course, have intrinsic artistic value; that it must forward Bennington's reputation in the arts; that it cannot focus on any one discipline to the exclusion of others; that it must make full and creative use of the physical plant; and that it must complement and enrich the cultural life of the area.

Above all, it was felt that BENNINGTON SUMMERS must be committed to process and experiment, rather than to performance and

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production, and that it must dedicate itself to providing serious practitioners and students of the arts with time away from quotidian pressures, with innovative and eloquent spaces in which to work, and with as much opportunity for discovery and interchange as possible. In short, the commitment of BENNINGTON SUMMERS must be to the cutting edge of artistic endeavor. With these guidelines in mind, a general design was arrived at.

Each summer program will have two components: one major project plus a series of short research and development programs. The major project will run for six weeks, providing a sensitively structured common ground on which artists — established and fledgling — can work and learn. During these six weeks, "apprentices" (gifted students, young professional and near-professional artists) will be able to work and study with "masters" in their own and other disciplines. Apprentices will remain for the duration of the

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project and will pay a fee similar to that of comparable summer arts programs. Funding is being sought for scholarships. The need for BENNINGTON SUMMERS to provide financial aid for a substantial percentage of its enrollment is recognized as crucial.

All masters will receive the same honorarium plus transportation, room and board. The incentive to participate in BENNINGTON SUMMERS will not be financial gain — rather, it will be the opportunity for serious, sustained work and interaction in exceptional facilities located in a highly attractive rural setting. Most masters will be in residence for the entire session; others will come for two or three weeks. They will spend approximately one-third of their time on their own work, one-third in teaching, and one-third in interchange with their peers.

Although most major six-week projects will be complete in themselves, it is possible that certain projects will generate excitement and

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suggest unexplored territory to such an extent that they will be continued into succeeding summers.

The research and development component of BENNINGTON SUMMERS, consisting each year of four or five separate week-long programs, will take place during the same six-week period as the major project. Each of these "R & Ds" will give forty paying participants the opportunity to observe and work with established artists, younger artists, and critics or writers within a particular domain. The R & Ds will be carefully documented and evaluated in terms of potential development into a future major program.

It is anticipated that the richness and intensity of the R & Ds will be of special interest to Bennington alumnae/i and friends of Bennington College, who will be given first opportunity to participate in exchange for a reasonable contribution to BENNINGTON SUMMERS.

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If space permits, others will be welcomed as participants. All artists, critics, and writers in this program will receive the same honorarium as the masters in the major program. The disciplinary focus of the R & Ds will not be the same as that of the major project in any one year.

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The major project of BENNINGTON SUMMERS in 1976 will be Jazz Laboratory at Bennington, a six-week exploration of an art form that not only has its own unquestionable validity and vitality, but is also an important vitalizing force for other disciplines. Jazz is very much alive in our culture, growing in popularity now, and — as it always has — finding new modes of expression. Its influence is evident in many areas: in the dance; in the musical theater; in the work of non-jazz composers; in pop and rock music; and in literature. The number of jazz clubs in the major cities is growing; New York alone now has more than sixty.

A glance at the Arts and Leisure section of The New York Times demonstrates the all-pervasiveness of jazz in America, and yet, ironically, this highly visible art form is also among our least understood, and is rarely given appropriate concern. Although a few universities and

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conservatories offer courses in jazz, and the number is growing, there is only one four-year conservatory — The Berklee Conservatory. Outside of large universities and the conservatories — whose structure is not always ideal for this type of activity — there are few places where jazz practitioners and serious students can come together in an unpressured atmosphere to learn from each other and to experiment on their own; there is no Music at Marlboro for jazz. This lack is made all the more glaring by the fact that jazz composers and performers are so often deprived of the opportunity to control their own careers. As David Bailey, Executive Director of Jazzmobile in New York put it: "Jazz musicians have never been able to direct their own art form. They are always manipulated and promoted by others."

The Jazz Laboratory of BENNINGTON SUMMERS 76 will be structured and directed by jazz educators

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and performers. It will bring together some fifty masters and 300 apprentices. The masters will be jazz performers, composers, critics and educators. Already committed to the program are: Christopher White, musician, Director Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University; Jimmy Owens, musician, Director, Collective Black Artists, Inc.; Billy Taylor, musician, composer; David Amram, musician, conductor, composer; David Bailey, Executive Director, Jazzmobile. (A list of other potential participants currently being contacted is attached.)

Most of the apprentices will be young musicians and composers -- professionals and near-professionals, as well as gifted conservatory, university and secondary school students. International participation is being sought, and jazz organizations are currently being contacted in Scandinavia, Japan, Eastern Europe and the Netherlands.

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Masters will basically have a tripartite responsibility: to their own work, to the apprentices and to exchange with their peers. However, maximum opportunity will be given to artists to establish their own method and use of time. Apprentices will be expected to divide their time among workshop-classes, individual practice and group interchange.

Jazz Laboratory will, as the above suggests, be a serious artistic "retreat" for jazz practitioners and students. Despite -- or because of -- its major emphasis, it will also be organically inter-disciplinary in the way the 1938-42 summers of the Bennington School of the Dance were. Then, a program dedicated to modern dance fostered innovation in music composition, stage design and lighting, and poetry. It would be difficult to aspire to larger and more meaningful success than an eventual equivalent of Martha Graham's moving

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tribute to those years: "It was remarkable: everything was possible and just there, the musicians, Louis Horst and Norman Lloyd; Ben Belitt the poet; Arch Lauterer who could do miracles of design; and the scientists and other intellectuals who were such marvelous companions in the exploring we were doing. It was a golden time."

Although Jazz Laboratory, like BENNINGTON SUMMERS as a whole, will not be performance oriented, process and performance are integrated in the nature of the jazz medium. Or, as Jean-Paul Sartre wrote, "Like ripe bananas, jazz must be consumed on the spot." There will, therefore, be ample opportunities for the interested public to "audit" the proceedings. There will be no scheduled public performances, no imported concerts, and no exploitation of the participants. All musical events at Jazz Laboratory will grow out of the interchange among participants. Upon payment of an entrance

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fee, visitors will become "daily auditors", free to listen to "open" rehearsals — as determined by artists — and spontaneous informal concerts. The new Arts Center — with its variety and great number of well-designed work and performance spaces — and the rest of the campus provide a magnificent site for musical events, both indoor and outdoor, spontaneous and planned, individual and group.

With Marlboro, Tanglewood, Jacob's Pillow, Williamstown, Lenox Art Center, and Saratoga all within a sixty-mile radius, there will certainly be no lack of serious art patrons to attend, and far from competing with these distinguished institutions, Jazz Laboratory will enrich the already exceptional artistic spectrum of the area.

Three quotations, one from a late great jazz musician, one from a leading jazz critic, and one from a contemporary jazz giant, provide an

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appropriate conclusion to the description of Jazz Laboratory, suggesting the relevance of jazz to a program committed to the future of artistic expression.

Jazz is the music of a people who have been told by their circumstances that they are unworthy. And in jazz, these people discover their own worthiness. They discover it in terms that mankind has not experienced before. I have deliberately borrowed a theological term in saying "unworthy." I think it is an apt one because the experience of feeling unworthy is fundamental to the twentieth-century man, who, whether he admits it or not, is in danger of losing his old gods or has lost them already. But the music involves discovery of one's worthiness from within. And it is thus an experience that men of many races and many circumstances have responded to.

Perhaps in jazz, then, the gods, in some small way, prepare for their metamorphosis.

—Martin Williams
The Jazz Tradition

After emancipation...all of these people who had been slaves, they needed the music more than ever now; it was like they were trying to find out in their music what they were supposed to do with their freedom: playing the music and listening to it — waiting for it

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to express what they needed to learn once they had learned it wasn't just white people the music had to reach to, nor even to their own people, but straight out to life, and to what a man does with his life when it finally is his.

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—Sidney Bechet

Jazz and freedom go hand in hand. That explains it. There isn't any more to add to it. If I do add to it, it gets complicated. That's something for you to think about. You think about it and dig it. You dig it."

—Thelonious Monk

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Jazz Laboratory

Potential Participants

BRASS

Garnett Brown
Ray Copeland
Sharon Freeman
Curtis Fuller
Thad Jones
Jimmy Owens

PIANO & ELECTRIC PIANO

Kenneth Barron
Patti Brown
Stanley Cowell
Chick Corea
Roland Hanna
Barry Harris
John Lewis
Les McCann
Billy Taylor
Cecil Taylor
Mary Lou Williams

SYNTHESIZER & ELECTRONICS

Paul Bley
Jan Hammer
David Horowitz

REEDS

Pepper Adams
Marion Brown
Ornette Coleman
Sonny Fortune
Jimmy Giuffre
Billy Harper
Eddie Harris
Jimmy Heath
Billy Mitchell

BASS (ACOUSTIC & FENDER

Ron Carter
Stanley Clarke
Richard Davis
Eddie Gomez
Percy Heath
Chris White
Reggie Workman
Vishnu (Bill) Wood

GUITAR

John Abercrombie
George Benson
Ted Dunbar
Grant Greene

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

Art Blakey
Roy Brooks
Chico Hamilton
Jo Jones
Billy Higgins
Elvin Jones
Connie Kay
(Michael) Olatunji
(James) M'Tume
Charlie Persip
Max Roach
Warren Smith
Al Harewood
Ali Hafid

VIBES

Roy Ayers
Gary Burton
Bobby Hutcherson
Milt Jackson

ARRANGERS

Gil Evans
Benny Golson
Thad Jones
Melba Liston
Horace Ott
Harold Wheeler
Ernie Wilkins

ORGAN

Charles Earland
Shirley Scott
Jimmy Smith
Larry Young

VOCALS

Betty Carter
Don Jay
Eddie Jefferson
Donnie Hathaway
Carman McCrae
Jon Hendricks
Anita O'Day
Irene Reid
Nina Simone
Leon Thomas

COMPOSITION & COMPOSERS

Jimmy Heath
Andrew Hill
Sharon Freeman
Horace Silver
Billy Taylor
Warren Smith
Mary Lou Williams
Earle Brown
Stanley Walden

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Potential Participants

EDUCATORS

Dave Baker
Stan Kenton
Ken McIntyre
Larry Ridley
Willie Ruff
Ray Copeland
Sharon Freeman
Jimmy Heath
Jimmy Giuffre
Max Roach
Chris White
Billy Taylor
Cecil Taylor
Vishnu (Bill) Wood

HISTORIANS & MUSICOLOGISTS

Nathan Davis
Leonard Goines
Leonard Feather
Ortiz Walters
Bob Wilber

SENIOR STATESMAN

Count Basie
Eubie Blake
Mercer Ellington
Roy Eldridge
Miles Davis
Dizzy Gillespie
Benny Goodman
Earl Hines
Lionel Hampton
Charles Mingus
Max Roach
Teddy Wilson

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In accord with the general design of BENNINGTON SUMMERS, the major summer project at Bennington will be complemented by a five-part Research and Development program. The R & Ds are intended to provide a counter-balance to the orientation of the major project. Each of these week-long projects is outlined below. All R & Ds will have forty "students" (principally Bennington alumnae/i) and several "masters" (artists and critics/writers). The artists, like those in the major project, will divide their time between their own projects and working with "student" participants. The critics and writers will act as moderators/facilitors, as well as contributing their own particular expertise. Although the R & Ds for 1976, with one exception, are all in the visual arts, future programs can take other disciplines as their point of departure, dealing, for instance, with film,

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specialty presses, video-tape, or new
relationships between the arts and the sciences.

R & D I: Welded Metal Sculpture

This program will explore the syntax and paradigms of abstract metal sculpture. Among the issues explored will be the relationship of the physical reality of a sculpture to its "pictorial" elements or opticality. The central concern will be the essence of the abstract, and the ways in which our structural and aesthetic ideas pertaining to form, weight, shaping, asymmetry and order are validated in the work. Three sculptors, assisted by three younger artists, will be in residence for one week in order to complete work of their own and to supervise the activities of the participants.

R & D II: Experimental Paper and Printmaking

Utilizing innovative equipment such as a vacuum silk-screen press, Garner Tullis, founder and director of the International Institute for Experimental Printmaking in Santa Cruz, will conduct a graphics workshop. The purpose of the program will be to stretch beyond conventional approaches to this medium. Some of the issues explored will be: relief, the attributes of paper as a material, and processes for casting or embossing graphic images of monumental scale without a press. All participants will manufacture their own paper from materials made available to them. In addition, Tullis and his assistant, Charles Hilger, will elaborate the ways of manufacturing inexpensive papermaking equipment.

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R & D III: Sound and Light Structures

The program in Light and Sound Structures will explore the use of light and sound — two seemingly ephemeral elements — as materials for artistic expression. Through an investigation of actual space and its properties as a malleable material, the issues of public vs. private structures and the nature of the art object will be examined, as will the role of chance in making art, and the manipulation of technology and nature. An attempt will be made to determine the physical limits and aesthetic boundaries of this medium. Three artists, each representing a different approach to these issues and concerns, will be in residence to continue their experiments and to supervise the work of the participants.

R & D IV: Visual Wit

This seminar will explore the ways in which wit surfaces and is incorporated into works of art. Some of the questions explored will be: What constitutes wit in the visual arts? What role does historical punning, caricature or character play? When is wit literary and when is it visual? What are the conventions, conceits and considerations involved? What modes of abstraction are used in transforming wit into art? Three artists, known for their different approaches to these questions, will be in residence to work on their own art and to guide the participants.

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R & D V: Unaccompanied Spatial Music for Large and Small Groups of Voices

Henry Brant and Frank Baker will offer a program designed to explore the qualities of unaccompanied spatial music for large and small groups of voices. The emphasis will be on planned and controlled improvisation in 20th century idioms, leading to "instant" operas, "instant" motets, and "instant" masses. Issues such as the contingencies of setting and spatial arrangement will be examined. The only instrument employed will be the human voice, and its range and flexibility will be investigated.

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