

## IRVIN MAYFIELD

### Biography

At only 30 years old, Irvin Mayfield has established himself as one of the most decorated and recorded jazz musicians of his generation. Mayfield is a versatile trumpeter, bandleader, composer, arranger and recording artist, as well as a passionate spokesman for the rich history and cultural significance of jazz and the city in which it was born. Appointed by the U.S. Senate, Congress and other governmental agencies as the cultural ambassador for both the State of Louisiana and the City of New Orleans in 2003, his name has become synonymous with the still-unfolding legacy of America's only indigenous music and its unique, celebratory style.

Even after Katrina—*especially* after Katrina, which took the life of his father, Irvin Mayfield Sr.—this tireless Renaissance man considers jazz nothing less than the manifestation of democracy. Within the freedom so intrinsic to the music, he sees the story of America. And in jazz's myriad rhythms and personalities, he finds the oversized soul of his beloved New Orleans. He is the recipient of the 24-karat gold Elysian Trumpet ([elysiantrumpet.com](http://elysiantrumpet.com)), hand-crafted for him by famed designer David Monette in honor of his father, whose body was found months after the storm on Elysian Fields Avenue in New Orleans, and all those who lost their lives in Katrina. Inlaid with jewels and images of New Orleans, along with a hurricane motif, the priceless instrument has been blessed by representatives of three of the world's religions, including the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Mayfield is the founder and artistic director of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, the only major jazz-performance institution in the Crescent City. NOJO, a non-profit organization whose big band tours internationally and provides an education about jazz and the city in which it originated to young and old alike, will record its first CD, on World Village, a subsidiary of the Harmonia Mundi label, early next year.

Mayfield, a professor and artistic director of New Orleans Jazz at the University of New Orleans, also is taking his expertise and insights out of New Orleans. His recent appointment to the position of artistic director of jazz for the

Minnesota Orchestra will provide numerous opportunities for creative collaborations. He will direct a five-concert jazz series, while also participating in various educational projects. He is looking forward to working with the orchestra on a new commissioned work he is writing, titled “The Art of Passion.”

“It’s about bringing jazz and classical music together, and trying to do it well for the first time,” he said. “A lot of people have done it, but nobody’s really done it where it’s been great. This has actually allowed us to entertain an important discussion: Why hasn’t it worked?” One of the reasons we think it doesn’t work is because classical music is primarily about execution and jazz is primarily about intent. When you add it up, it all equals the same thing, but it’s those primary tools of implementation and tactic that makes a very big difference.

“Maybe it can be something larger, so we’ve come up with three ideas: adventure, romance and inspiration. A classical orchestra can be adventurous, a jazz band can be romance, and we both can do the inspirational.”

For Mayfield, though, the significance of the cooperative effort extends beyond the music.

“The idea of ‘The Art of Passion’ is also something that I’ve used throughout the businesses that I have,” he said. “It tells us what’s important. No person ever attained greatness without being passionate. There are many things that I’m passionate about, but jazz gave me the first opportunity to be passionate about anything. Art gives us a road, a way to get there. The music is just a representation of the passion that I’m trying to get out. So I come up with as many forms and as many different ways to exude this passion of things that I’m interested in.”

Mayfield first found the passion as a budding trumpeter during his teens. Growing up in New Orleans, he says, provided a unique perspective. “At any given moment, you can be out on your stoop and find people coming down the street with a tuba and a trombone and a clarinet, and then 500 people behind them dancing to 1920s music,” he says. “It’s really a positive experience growing up in New Orleans, because the drum major of a band is more popular than the captain of the football team. I started playing the trumpet because I had a best friend who was cute and the girls liked him and he made straight A’s, and I wanted to be like him. So he got the thing with the buttons on it and I told my dad I want to get the thing with the buttons on it. I had no idea at that point that my dad played the trumpet, too. In New

Orleans, people do things like that and they do them better than professionals in other places. In New Orleans you can dance, you can play music and that's just what you do. It's not anything special; it's just what's supposed to be done."

More than a decade into his professional career, Mayfield has discovered countless ways to express his passion, style and sense of adventure through jazz. Yet despite his many accomplishments, he says, "The funny thing is, I don't feel like I'm doing enough. I don't know if I'm crazy, if it's ego or sleep deprivation, but I'm not satisfied unless every second of the day is filled with me doing something that I think is positive."

In addition to his solo work and various collaborative such as that with the Minnesota Orchestra, Mayfield co-founded Los Hombres Calientes, a Grammy Award-nominated Latin jazz band, with drummer Jason Marsalis (brother of Wynton and Branford) and percussionist Bill Summers in 1998. He also performs and records with his own band.

This past April, Mayfield released his 11<sup>th</sup> album on New Orleans-based Basin Street Records. Titled "Love Songs, Ballads and Standards," it was the first release on the label since Hurricane Katrina. On it, he and Ellis Marsalis, the patriarch of the Marsalis family, perform instrumental interpretations of time-tested classics such "Yesterday" by the Beatles and contemporary gems such as "Don't Know Why" by Norah Jones.

Mayfield, whose extensive discography stretches back nearly a decade, is rooted firmly in the present, but has benefited enormously from studying jazz trumpeters who came before him, such as Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis and Clifford Brown. He is a protégé of Wynton Marsalis, another promoter of the great heritage of New Orleans. Mayfield's relationship with the Marsalis family goes back many years.

Five years ago, Mayfield founded the Institute of Jazz Culture at Dillard University in New Orleans (he no longer is at Dillard). That same year, he was unanimously appointed to the post of cultural ambassador for the City of New Orleans and May debuted "Strange Fruit" featuring the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra and the Dillard University Concert Choir.

Mayfield and the NOJO made history on Nov. 17, 2005 when they symbolically reopened New Orleans with the performance of a historic piece titled “All the Saints” – composed by Mayfield – at Christ Church Cathedral. The commission was the first of its kind by an Episcopal diocese, and it served New Orleans as the first major cultural event inside the city post-Katrina.

Mayfield’s numerous collaborative ventures have made him a sought-after composer for special events, such as the New Orleans Museum of Art’s commissioned musical tribute (Mayfield’s first-ever commission) to renowned African-American artist Gordon Parks. The piece, titled “The Half-Past Autumn Suite,” was later recorded with Parks, Wynton Marsalis and the Irvin Mayfield Quintet, and released by Basin Street Records.

Los Hombres Calientes’ recording “Volume 4: Voodoo Dance: (2003), was nominated for a *Billboard* Latin music award. “Volume Three: New Congo Square” (2001) was nominated for a Grammy. And “Volume One” (2000) was awarded *Billboard*’s Latin music award for Contemporary Latin Jazz Album of the Year. Outside of Basin Street Records, Mayfield releases on the Half Note label. In addition, in 2005, he recorded “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” on Higher Ground/Blue Note Records, for the Musician’s Relief Fund. He performed the tune for President George W. Bush during Black Music Month.

Mayfield has remained steadfast in his effort to bring New Orleans culture back to its feet. He participated as advisory member to Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu’s Louisiana Cultural Rebirth Committee, and as committee member to Mayor C. Ray Nagin’s Bring New Orleans Back culture sub-committee.

Mayfield is a board member to the following New Orleans organizations:

- The New Orleans Jazz Orchestra
- Chairman of the Board for the New Orleans Public Library
- New Orleans Arts Council
- New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation
- Louisiana State University’s Department of Psychiatry and Health Science
- Unity of New Orleans as the communications chair and the official spokesperson for the City Of New Orleans’ homelessness commission
- New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, member of finance subcommittee

Additionally, Mayfield is:

- Professor and Artistic Director of New Orleans Jazz at the University of New Orleans

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- Artist- in-residence at Christ Church Cathedral in New Orleans
- Artistic Director of Jazz for the Minnesota Orchestra
- Vice Chairman of the New Orleans Public Library Foundation
- Vice Chairman for First Responders Fund

#### Irvin Mayfield Discography

- New Orleans Jazz Orchestra's debut on Harmonia Mundi is scheduled for 2009.
- "Love Songs, Ballads & Standards" Irvin Mayfield and Ellis Marsalis. Basin Street Records, 2008.
- "Higher Ground: Irvin Mayfield" performs on compilation benefit CD. Blue Note Records, 2005.
- "Strange Fruit" Irvin Mayfield, the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra and the Dillard University Choir. Basin Street Records, 2005.
- "Carnival: Volume 5" Los Hombres Calientes. Basin Street Records, 2005.
- "Volume Four: Vodou Dance" Los Hombres Calientes. Basin Street Records, 2003.
- "Half Past Autumn Suite" Irvin Mayfield Quintet. Basin Street Records, 2003.
- "How Passion Fall" Irvin Mayfield Quintet. Basin Street Records, 2001.
- "Volume Three: New Congo Square" Los Hombres Calientes. Basin Street Records, 2001.
- "Jaz Sawyer/Irvin Mayfield 20/20: Live at the Blue Note" Irvin Mayfield and Jaz Sawyer. Half Note, 2000.
- "The Irvin Mayfield Sextet: Live at the Blue Note" Irvin Mayfield Sextet. Half Note, 1999.
- "Volume Two" Los Hombres Calientes. Basin Street Records, 1999.
- "Irvin Mayfield: Irvin Mayfield Quintet" Basin Street Records, 1999.
- "Los Hombres Calientes" Los Hombres Calientes. Basin Street Records, 1998.

Irvin Mayfield is currently on tour with The New Orleans Jazz Orchestra.

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