

# The Arts Continue to Flourish at Howard

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The arts have flourished at Howard for more than 142 years. We have embraced the arts as essential to the life and mission of the University. The first free-hand drawing class was offered in 1871, a few years after our founding in 1867. The Music Department is celebrating its 100th anniversary, the Art Department recently celebrated its 90th and the Department of Theatre Arts has marked nearly 65 years.

This past semester, I attended the opening night of the Fine Arts Division's modern dance ballet, "Hamdan: Through the Gate of Tears." This excellent production was a result of a collaboration between Howard and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, which has begun a multiyear series of programming.

For many decades, Howard's arts and humanities programs have deeply influenced American cultural language and intellectual discourse. Our legacy is anchored in the belief that the arts provide rich experiences that help our students become creative and constructive global citizens. At Howard, we offer a rare combination of academic and cultural competence with professional training.

Howard's reach is broad, deep and worldwide: on stage, on screen, in television, in museums and galleries, in concert halls and in art history and cultural studies. Howard alumni, faculty and even students have made significant contributions in all these areas—many as award-winning actors, playwrights, choreographers, vocalists, instrumentalists, designers, artists, curators, professors and administrators.

Last fall, District of Columbia Mayor Vincent C. Gray honored the Division of Fine Arts during the 28th Annual Mayor's Arts Awards for its unparalleled contributions to arts education.

And in May, during our Commencement convocation, we honored Benny Golson, a multitalented and internationally renowned jazz legend. We celebrate his contributions to the field and his role as a sterling ambassador of the Capstone. He received an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, witnessed by more than 2,600 graduates and the largest doctoral class in the history of the University. You will learn more about Golson in this issue of the magazine.

Also last month, Howard University's Vocal Jazz Studies Program received three 2014 *Downbeat Magazine* Student Music Awards. This marks the 10th *Downbeat* award to Howard's premier vocal jazz ensemble Afro Blue. They have been featured on NPR's *All Things Considered*, reached the top four on NBC's *The Sing-Off*, performed at the White House and teamed up with icons, including the legendary Bobby McFerrin.

We were joined this spring by the celebrated trumpeter Hugh Masekela as part of a semester-long tribute to the life and lessons of Nelson Mandela. Continued partnerships with Mr. Masekela and other pioneers will further enhance our programs and benefit our students. Without question, Howard's future in music, theater and the arts is thriving. ■IU

