



# **I Walked With Giants: The Autobiography of Jimmy Heath**

*Jimmy Heath, Joseph McLaren*

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Composer of more than 100 jazz pieces, three-time Grammy nominee, and performer on more than 125 albums, Jimmy Heath earned a place of honor in the history of jazz. Over his long career, Heath knew many jazz giants such as Charlie Parker and played with other innovators, including John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and especially Dizzy Gillespie. Heath also won their respect and friendship. In this extraordinary autobiography, the legendary Heath creates a "dialogue" with musicians and family members. As in jazz, where improvisation by one performer prompts another to riff on the same theme, *I Walked with Giants* juxtaposes Heath's account of his life and career with recollections from jazz giants about life on the road and making music on the world's stages. His memories of playing with his equally legendary brothers Percy and Albert (aka "Tootie") dovetail with their recollections. Heath reminisces about a South Philadelphia home filled with music and a close-knit family that hosted musicians performing in the city's then thriving jazz scene. Milt Jackson recalls, "I went to their house for dinner...Jimmy's father put Charlie Parker records on and told everybody that we had to be quiet till dinner because he had Bird on. ..When I [went] to Philly, I'd always go to their house." Today Heath performs, composes, and works as a music educator and arranger. By turns funny, poignant, and extremely candid, Heath's story captures the rhythms of a life in jazz. Jimmy Heath is widely recognized as one of the greats in jazz. A saxophonist, composer, arranger, and educator, Heath grew up in Philadelphia with his renowned brothers, Percy, the longtime bassist with the Modern Jazz Quartet, and Albert "Tootie," a highly respected drummer. The three formed the Heath Brothers Band in the 70s. Jimmy Heath directed the Jazz Studies master's degree program in performance at Queens College (CUNY). Joseph McLaren is Professor of English at Hofstra University and the author of *Langston Hughes: Folk Dramatist in the Protest Tradition, 1921-1943*, and editor of several additional titles.

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