

# Thales Thomas "Skipp" Pearson

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Thales Thomas "Skipp" Pearson, son of Alfred T. and Louise E. Pearson, is a native of Orangeburg, South Carolina, where he attended the public schools and, after four years of service in the Air Force and touring with shows, he returned to his hometown and graduated in 1973 from Claflin College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music.

As a young lad in school, twelve years of age and no voice change, Skipp was learning hard knocks as a paperboy for the Times and Democrat in Orangeburg. Only one year later, he was playing with his own band for dances in the local area and on television. When he graduated from high school, he joined the United States Air Force and played clubs from California to England.

Skipp worked for twenty-four years as a band director and/or music teacher in both Bamberg County and Clarendon County School Districts. In conjunction with these educational assignments he maintained his external musical connections by performing in the United States and throughout the world. He has shared the stage with internationally renowned musicians such as Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, Patti LaBelle, and others.

During the past five years Skipp Pearson has performed weekly at the Hunter Gatherer in Columbia during sessions that he calls "The Workshop." Here, he invites all musicians to sit in and is known to include players ranging from students to internationally known artists. He is currently creating The Jazz Resource Center with the intent of establishing studio and gathering space for jazz musicians. This enrichment program is designed to help students with homework and to tutor them. The name of his current band, Jazzology, reflects Pearson's affinity for learning. Pearson's work draws upon and further enhances the spirit of community among musicians and ultimately enriches the music scene in South Carolina.

During the Charleston-based Spoleto Festival USA in the early 1990's, Pearson met Wynton Marsalis, who sat in after his evening performance with Pearson and the Bill Aycock Trio who were performing at the Omni Hotel. Two years later, Wynton and his group performed at Greenstreets, a local jazz club in Columbia. Pearson was invited to the stage to play with Marsalis' band. This impromptu arrangement was repeated again the following year and demonstrates the camaraderie among musicians that is highly valued by Skipp Pearson. At Greenstreets Pearson met Wycliff Gordon, at that time Wynton Marsalis' trombonist, who was recently featured as a guest artist in concert at the Hunter Gatherer in Columbia with Pearson and Jazzology for the Thursday Night Jazz Workshop. Other guest appearances at the Jazz Workshop include Joe Samples (of The Jazz Crusaders), Columbia's own Chris Potter, and Ron Westray, a Columbia native who is presently a member of Marsalis' band. Such combinations of talent not only enliven the musicians' experience but provide the audience with unique musical experiences.

Pearson's contributions to the community of musicians as well as his musical ability are greatly valued by his peers. In a letter of recommendation for the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award for the Arts, Wynton Marsalis wrote: "In the artistic community, someone who has achieved 'super special' status as a jazz musician is referred to as a 'local legend.' The local legend is a repository of unrecorded history, a hands-on educator, a personal mentor to aspiring artists and above all, a first rate performer. In Columbia, South Carolina, that man is Skipp Pearson. Skipp embraces the highest ideals of American democracy through the art of jazz. When I have had the opportunity to share the bandstand with Mr. Pearson, his big-blues-drenched tenor saxophone resonates with the true meaning of Southern hospitality."

Skipp Pearson has received a number of honors, such as Induction into the South Carolina State University Jazz Band Hall of Fame in 1998, a commendation in 2002 by a resolution of the South Carolina State House of Representatives "for his extraordinary contributions to the world of jazz music and to congratulate him on his outstanding career and accomplishments," and the 2003 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award for the Arts in the category of Individual Artist. Skipp Pearson is a worldwide jazz legend.



# OCTOBER

# 2004

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Colin Powell was appointed first African-American chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1989.	2 Thurgood Marshall was sworn in, becoming the first African-American Supreme Court Justice, in 1967.
3 Nat King Cole was the first black performer to host his own tv show in 1956.	4 National Black convention met in Syracuse, New York, in 1864.	5 Congresswoman Yvonne Burke was born in 1932.	6 Fisk Jubilee Singers began national tour in 1871.	7 Toni Morrison became first African-American to win Nobel Prize in literature.	8 Jesse Jackson born in 1941.	9 O.B. Clare patented the rail trestle in 1888.
10 Singer Ben Vereen was born in 1946.	<b>Columbus Day</b> 11 A. Miles patented the elevator in 1887.	12 Richard ("Dick") Gregory was born in 1932.	13 Arna W. Bontemps, noted poet, was born in 1902.	14 Martin Luther King, Jr. awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.	15 Clarence Thomas confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1992.	16 John Brown led attack on Harper's Ferry in 1859.
17 Capital Savings Bank opened in Washington, D.C., in 1888.	18 Terry McMillan was born in 1951.	19 The U.S. Navy was opened to African-American women in 1944.	20 John Merrick organized North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, 1898.	21 "Dizzy" Gillespie was born in Cheraw, SC, in 1917.	22 Clarence S. Green became the first African-American certified in neurological surgery.	23 The NAACP petitioned the United Nations about racial injustics in 1947.
24 Jackie Robinson died in 1972.	25 Benjamin O. Davis became the first African-American general in U.S. Army in 1940.	26 Inventor T. Marshall patented the fire extinguisher in 1872.	27 D. B. Downing, inventor, patented his street letter box in 1891.	28 Founder of The Underground Railroad, Levi Coffin, was born in 1798.	29 The Supreme Court ordered end to segregation in schools "at once" in 1969.	30 Richard Arrington was elected the first Black mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, in 1979.
<b>Halloween</b> <b>Daylight Savings Time Ends</b> 31 Ethel Waters, actor and singer, was born in 1900.						