

# American MASTERS

thirteen  
WNET NEW YORK

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## press information



AMERICAN MASTERS  
is produced for PBS  
by Thirteen/WNET  
New York

INNOVATIVE PROFILES OF CAROL BURNETT, TONY BENNETT, DAVID HOCKNEY AND CHARLES SCHULZ HIGHLIGHT ANOTHER STELLAR SEASON FROM THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S *AMERICAN MASTERS*, PREMIERING ON PBS

Critically acclaimed for its "brilliant cultural biographies" (TV Guide), the *AMERICAN MASTERS* series is determined to meet and exceed expectations during its 21<sup>st</sup> season of groundbreaking profiles. Rounding out an eclectic group of documentaries are films on:

- Les Paul, who rigged up a microphone from telephone parts to get a bigger sound from his acoustic Sears, Roebuck guitar.
- Conservationist and painter John James Audubon, who probably killed more birds than anyone in history.
- Literary lioness Zora Neale Hurston, who died a pauper's death in total obscurity.
- Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco, whose frescoes helped inspire President Franklin D. Roosevelt to put artists to work on public walls in Depression-era America.

"Our hope is that viewers of this season's deeply personal and intelligent biographies take with them a greater understanding of our collective cultural history," says Susan Lacy, creator and executive producer of *AMERICAN MASTERS*. "Viewed as a whole, this latest roster of films should go a long way toward deepening public appreciation of the arts in America."

Fresh from its eighth Peabody Award, the *AMERICAN MASTERS* series launched its latest season May 2 with *Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built*. Below are capsules of upcoming *AMERICAN MASTERS* programs, which air at 9 p.m. (ET). Check local listings for broadcast details, which may change.

- ***Les Paul: Chasing Sound, July 11***  
In celebration of his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday, *AMERICAN MASTERS* looks at the life of the legendary Les

- more -

Paul – father of the solid-body electric guitar, inventor of overdubbing, king of the '50s pop charts and rock and roll pioneer. Les Paul is still irascible, still egotistical, still indefatigable, still performing and holding court every Monday night at the Iridium Jazz Club in New York City. He is the last of that self-educated, brilliantly innovative generation of media masterminds who revolutionized popular music and reinvented global musical culture.

- ***David Hockney: The Colors of Music, July 18***

An English born artist who is based in Los Angeles, Hockney is considered one of the most influential artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Poetic and narrative, his work progressed from pop to naturalism to photo collage, always with a unique, powerful use of light and color. His work has always been critically acclaimed and he has faced no hardship in his career. But at the height of his craft, as this film shows, Hockney engaged in a private race against time. As deafness closed in, Hockney devoted his creative energy to stage design for opera, with a passion and impact reminiscent of Picasso.

- ***John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature, July 25***

Energetic, gifted and vain, Audubon was self-taught and self-made, the illegitimate son of a French sea captain and servant girl. From the Caribbean and the French countryside, he eventually moved to Kentucky at age 23. After failed business efforts and bankruptcy, he pursued his true passion - finding, shooting and drawing birds - ultimately realizing his dream of publishing *The Birds of America*, the monumental collection of 435 life-size prints, some of those prints now fetch more than \$100,000 at auction.

- ***Tony Bennett: The Music Never Ends, September 12***

The man Frank Sinatra called “the best singer in the business” has been in the business more than 50 years, selling 50 million records and reaping 15 Grammy awards, including two at age 80. The story of a common man with an uncommon gift, the film includes complete coverage of Bennett’s 2005 Monterey Jazz Festival performance and interviews at his home and painting studio. This reflection on Bennett’s life and music is amplified by a rich historical archive and the voices of numerous close friends, including director Arthur Penn, whom he served with in World War II; Harry Belafonte, whom he marched with in Selma, Alabama; and Clint Eastwood, the film’s executive producer.

- ***Orozco: Man of Fire, September 19***

Often thought of as the *other* Mexican muralist, beside his more flamboyant compatriot Diego Rivera, Orozco was a leader of the Mexican Renaissance. His bold, dynamic frescoes had a profound impact on American painters and inspired FDR to put artists to work during the Great Depression. His most famous U.S. murals – *The Table of Universal Brotherhood*, *The Epic of American Civilization* and *Prometheus* – still convey their power in New York, New Hampshire and California. An iconoclastic who survived the loss of his left hand and destruction of more than half his early work by border agents, Orozco’s travels back and forth across the U.S.-Mexico border evoke the larger Mexican migrant-immigrant experience and have provocative parallels to present times.

- ***Good Ol’ Charles Schulz, October 29***

This is a quintessentially Midwestern story of an unassuming, self-doubting man who, through expressing his unique view of the world, redefined the comic art form with Peanuts. His genius lay in depicting the daily collisions of insiders and outsiders, of mundane cruelties and transcendent hopes – seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. The Peanuts cast of characters is as

familiar to us as our own siblings; their trials and tribulations speak of our families and evoke our childhood desperations. They are portrayed with whimsy and poignancy – and always with love and tolerance, each representing different facets of Schulz’s personality and his perspectives on 20<sup>th</sup>-century America.

- ***Carol Burnett* (w.t.), November 5**

America in the 1960s and '70s was in turmoil. The civil rights struggle, the war in Vietnam and the sexual revolution defined a nation in conflict. But at 10 o'clock every Saturday night, in dorms and dens, in living rooms and bedrooms across the country, Americans watched *The Carol Burnett Show*. For 11 years, this wacky performer yelled like Tarzan and won – and sometime broke – our hearts with her edgy, always sympathetic, characters. She could fall down a flight of stairs or hold her own in a duet with Julie Andrews. Yet, as with so many brilliant comedians, hers was a difficult childhood. A glimpse of something deeper and darker began to emerge in the dramatic career that followed her TV variety show.

- ***Zora Neale Hurston* (w.t.), February TBD**

Writer, cultural anthropologist, chronicler of folk roots and ethnic traditions, daughter of former slaves. Hurston was one of the most celebrated – and most controversial – figures of the Harlem Renaissance, that creatively expansive era in the 1920s when “the Negro was in vogue.” She attained unique success in all areas, but her words and her conclusions were often surrounded in contention – she was called everything from flamboyant to outrageous, from unpredictable to bodacious. Long after her death, she was resurrected by Alice Walker and such works as *Dust Tracks on a Road* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* are essential reading today.

To take *AMERICAN MASTERS* beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories, and personalities of masters past and present, the companion Web site ([www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters)), created by Thirteen/WNET New York, offers interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes, and other resources.

*AMERICAN MASTERS* is produced for PBS by Thirteen/WNET New York. This acclaimed series, now celebrating its 21<sup>st</sup> season, has become a cultural legacy in its own right. The *AMERICAN MASTERS* film library is one of the most highly honored in television history with profiles of more than 140 artistic giants. In addition to eight Peabodys, an Oscar, a duPont-Columbia and two Grammys, *AMERICAN MASTERS* has won 17 Emmys, including Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2004.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The Thirteen Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects - including the Celebration of Teaching and Learning - as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: [www.thirteen.org](http://www.thirteen.org).

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