DAVID WARREN BRUBECK

Mr. President, esteemed colleagues, students, and friends, today it is our privilege to honor pianist, composer, Dave Brubeck, legendary jazz performer, and influential force in the composition of contemporary sacred music.

In the 1950's, the music of the Dave Brubeck Quartet was associated with the intricate, lightly swinging sound known as "West Coast Cool". However, his emphasis on improvisation and his adventurous harmonic experimentation turned out some extremely "hot" recordings. Within one year his group won the Down Beat Critics poll and was chosen Jazz Combo of the Year by fans. The Dave Brubeck Quartet became the sound that identified an era, and started a wave of popularity for jazz on college campuses. The Dave Brubeck Quartet won the first jazz poll conducted by a black newspaper, The Pittsburgh Courier. In 1959 Dave Brubeck appeared and recorded with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic in a work written by Brubeck's brother, Howard. In 1960 the Dave Brubeck Quartet, with Paul Desmond, Eugene Wright, and Joe Morello, released their first experiment in odd-metered rhythms. The album, Time Out and its singles, "Take Five" and "Blue Rondo a la Turk" became the first in modern jazz to "go gold".

Born in Concord, California, in 1920, Dave went to the College of the Pacific in Stockton, California, as a pre-med student with the aim of becoming a veterinarian, but soon changed his major to music. Upon his discharge from the service in 1946, he returned from Europe to study with the famous French composer, Darius Milhoud. With Milhoud's encouragement, Brubeck began composing and performing in an octet which included Paul Desmond, Cal Tjader and Bill Smith. Brubeck and Desmond became an inseparable team, selling millions of records, winning dozens of jazz polls and eventually forming the Dave Brubeck Quartet. After the original quartet disbanded, Dave toured and recorded with different musicians, including Gerry Mulligan, Paul Desmond, Alan Dawson, Jack Six, and for two years led an all Brubeck quartet with his sons, Darius, Dan and Chris.

Dave Brubeck's choral compositions include The Light in the Wilderness, for chorus and orchestra; The Gates of Justice, which uses texts from Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Old Testament; La Fiesta de la Posada, a Christmas pageant in the Latin American folk tradition; Beloved Son, an oratorio; and his newest work, Joy Cometh in the Morning, premiered recently by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

Over his long career, Dave Brubeck has been honored in many ways. He was inducted into the first Playboy Jazz Hall of Fame along with Louis Armstrong and Frank Sinatra, and was one of the first musicians to have a star placed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. A Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale, Dave holds five honorary degrees. He has played for every president beginning with Kennedy, and in 1988 was invited to the White House to perform at a dinner honoring the Gorbachevs. World tours, including several to the Middle East and Eastern Europe for the State Department, have made jazzman Dave Brubeck one of America's foremost goodwill ambassadors.

Dave Brubeck continues to enrich the world with his performances, his compositions, and his tireless devotion to the world of music. In November of 1990 Dave Brubeck's appearance with the London Symphony Orchestra celebrated his seventieth birthday and fifty-plus years as a jazz performer. Therefore, on behalf of the faculty of Kalamazoo College, I recommend that David Warren Brubeck be awarded the honorary degree, Doctor of Music.