

## Jessie Smith Edwards Earns First Ever "Student of Distinction" Music Award

**EAST ORANGE, NJ** — Jessie Smith Edwards, a 16-year-old who attends Cicely Tyson School of Performing and Fine Arts in East Orange, New Jersey is the inaugural recipient of the Jazz House Kids and RS Berkeley Band Instruments Student of Distinction Music Award. Jessie was presented with a hand-selected Erwin Otto Cello in recognition of his talent and musical efforts, courtesy of RS Berkeley Band Instruments at a special one-day extravaganza hosted by Jazz House Kids with acclaimed trumpeter Chris Botti and bassist Christian McBride at William Patterson University in May.

Originally a violin student, Jessie began playing the cello 18 months ago and his musical development has gone into overdrive. He is the youngest member of the South Orange Symphony, a scholarship student at Montclair State University Preparatory Center, and a participant in JazzConnections Summer Workshop and Concert Series. This is the first cello he has owned.

Jessie's musical accomplishments are all the more impressive when viewed along with the challenges of his young life. Jessie lost his mother to illness when he was a baby and soon after became a ward of the state, where he lived with an uncertain future. Recently Jessie was adopted by the Edwards family and has thrived under the direction of his dedicated orchestra teacher, Tricia Galvez Gruswitz. Jessie looks forward to attending college as a musician and hopes to work with children and share with them his talents and dreams.

Each year, the Student of Distinction Music Award will be given to a deserving New Jersey public school music student who embodies the qualities Jazz House Kids seeks to foster — leadership, musician ship, creativity and dedication to excellence.



left to right:  
Les Silver, RS Berkeley;  
Jessie Smith Edwards;  
Chris Botti;  
Christian McBride;  
Al Pantalone,  
Erwin Otto Strings;  
Tricia Galvez Gruswitz,  
Jessie's music teacher

### About Jazz House Kids

Jazz House Kids was founded in 2002 with a mission to enhance the quality of life for young people, their families, and teachers through the medium of jazz. The non-profit organization provides a wide range of creative and tested enrichment programming for students in grades K-12 that has been shown to boost achievement, particularly in underperforming schools. In-school programs include an acclaimed multi-media assembly, Let's Build a Jazz House Workshop™; two music residencies — the Vocal Summit and the Instrumental Jazz Lab — which bring professional teaching artists into public schools over an extended period; and Jazz Across the Curriculum™, a professional development program for New Jersey K-8 teachers. Jazz House Kids programs incorporate New Jersey's stringent Core Curriculum Content Standards for Performing Arts, Career Education, and Consumer, Family and Life Skills along with its Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers. Since 2002, Jazz House Kids programs have served more than 13,500 New Jersey public school students and over 700 teachers and administrators.



left to right:  
Chris Botti;  
Jessie Smith Edwards,  
award recipient;  
Melissa Walker,  
executive director,  
Jazz House Kids;  
Christian McBride,  
bassist, Jazz House  
Kids board member

### About RS Berkeley Band Instruments

Based in northern New Jersey, RS Berkeley Band Instruments has quietly been earning the respect of music educators and players ranging from beginning students and seasoned pros. The company is headed by Les Silver, who is perhaps best known for his 12-year association with Applied Microphone Technology, where he focused on artist relations and regularly consulted with some of the world's top musicians. His ongoing relationships with these players have in turn informed RS Berkeley's instrument designs. Silver regularly communicates with saxophonists Joe Lovano, Sonny Rollins, and Dave Liebman, and worked closely with Michael Brecker shortly before Brecker's passing in 2006. The company also relies on instrument designers, such as Al Pantalone, who helped expand the Erwin Otto string instrument line to include hand-carved violins, violas, cellos, and basses. □



Expressing, Creating, Building  
One child at a time.