

# SHINING LAMP

A Bahá'í who served humanity with radiance

## DIZZY GILLESPIE: PLAYING TO A TUNE OF HIS OWN

**W**hat would you do if you were a jazz trumpeter, and someone sat on your trumpet and bent the bell? Some musicians might get upset. But Dizzy Gillespie picked it up, played it, and liked what he heard. He used a bent horn from then on.

Dizzy was born John Birks Gillespie on October 21, 1918. The nickname “Dizzy” suited his playful personality. He liked to include funny dances and jokes in his shows.

A born inventor, Dizzy experimented with all kinds of instruments. As a child, he played the piano, drums, guitar, clarinet, mandolin, and bass fiddle. At about age 11, Dizzy invented a drumstick with a soft wire brush on one end and a hard mallet on the other. Years later, he nailed bottle caps to a broomstick that could be waved, struck, or pounded for rhythm.

Dizzy's best-known invention is a kind of jazz music called bebop. In jazz, musicians try out new sounds and unusual rhythms by instinct – without using written music. That's called improvisation. In bebop, the improvisation has less melody and more rhythm changes than traditional jazz.



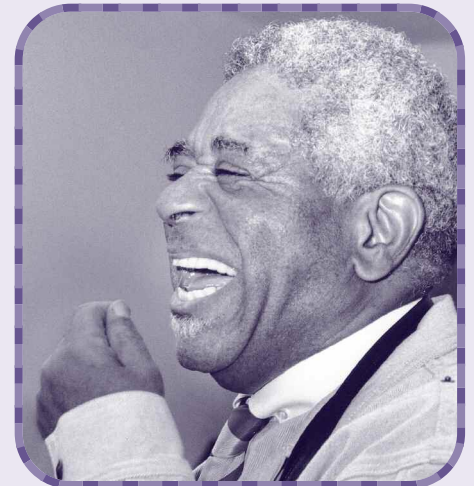
**Left:** All over the world, jazz legend Dizzy Gillespie was known by his trademark bent horn and his puffed-out cheeks.

**Below:** Dizzy brought humor and joyfulness to his innovative performances.

### STANDING FOR UNITY

Dizzy's unique point of view didn't just affect his music, though. He stood up for equality and unity, even though he was surrounded by racism against African Americans. He led one of the first bands to include both black and white musicians. Dizzy said, “Because I'm purple and there's another cat who's orange doesn't mean that we can't come into one big compatible complementary arrangement.”

When he was 48 years old, Dizzy learned about the Bahá'í Faith. He was attracted to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings about the oneness of humanity. Two years later, he became a Bahá'í. From then on, Dizzy shared the Bahá'í Faith with royalty, presidents, fans, and friends everywhere.



### A HAPPY BREATH

Throughout his legendary career, Dizzy played on over 400 albums and won every jazz award possible. But more than any achievement, he valued service most. Before he died in 1993, he said, “The highest role is the role in the service of humanity, and if I can take that, then I'll be happy. When I breathe the last time, it'll be a happy breath.”