



# Softly, With Feeling: Joe Wilder and the Breaking of Barriers in American Music

*Edward Berger*

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"Joe Wilder set the table. His struggles made it easier for me and many others."--From the Foreword by Wynton Marsalis

Trumpeter Joe Wilder is distinguished for his achievements in both the jazz and classical worlds. He was a founding member of the Symphony of the New World, where he played first trumpet, and he performed as lead trumpet and soloist with Lionel Hampton, Jimmy Lunceford, Dizzy Gillespie, and Count Basie. Yet Wilder is also known as a pioneer who broke down racial barriers, the first African American to hold a principal chair in a Broadway show orchestra, and one of the first African Americans to join a network studio orchestra.

In *Softly, with Feeling*, Edward Berger tells Wilder's remarkable story—from his growing up in working-class Philadelphia to becoming one of the first 1,000 black Marines during World War II—with tremendous feeling and extensive reminiscences by Wilder and his colleagues, including renowned Philadelphia-area musicians Jimmy Heath and Buddy DeFranco. Berger also places Wilder's experiences within a broader context of American musical and social history.

Wilder's modesty and ability to perform in many musical genres may have prevented him from achieving popular recognition, but in *Softly, with Feeling*, his legacy and contributions to music and culture are assured.

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