

'Yes We Can Can'

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The Tulane University community remembers legendary New Orleans musician, composer and music producer Allen Toussaint, who died at the age of 77 early Tuesday (Nov. 10) in Madrid, Spain, after a concert. The 2013 Tulane University Commencement ceremony featured a surprise musical performance by two of its honorary degree recipients. Here, Allen Toussaint and Dr. John, among New Orleans' most beloved musical icons, perform Toussaint's hit "Yes We Can Can." Dr. Michael White and the Original Liberty Jazz Band provided accompaniment. Other dignitaries present included His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, who delivered the keynote address to the graduates. The ceremony took place on May 18, 2013, in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans.

"Allen Toussaint was a musical saint in every sense of the word, based on his work as a composer, pianist, band leader, record producer and inspiration to musicians all over the world," says Bruce Boyd Raeburn, director of special collections and curator, [Hogan Jazz Archive](#) at Tulane. "You can't talk about New Orleans music without mentioning his name."

[Matt Sakakeeny](#), associate professor of music, adds, "You can't put Allen Toussaint in a box. He was one of the great piano professors of New Orleans, recording his first piano record as a teenager in 1958. He was the most important composer and producer in New Orleans in the 1960s, writing and recording soul hits like "Mother-in-Law" by Ernie K-Doe and "Working in a Coal Mine" by Lee Dorsey. But he also worked with The Band, Paul McCartney, Patti LaBelle, just on and on. And for anyone who lives in New Orleans, Allen was a fixture around town, always greeting people with his warm smile. He was truly one of a kind and we're all shocked at his sudden death."

Music scholar [Melissa A. Weber](#), WWOZ-FM radio programmer and a master of arts in musicology candidate at Tulane, says, "Allen Toussaint shaped so much of the sound of soulful New Orleans music that it's nearly impossible to comprehend what it

would be like without his influence and involvement as a songwriter, arranger, producer and performer. His work with our own legends, like The Meters, Irma Thomas, Ernie K-Doe, Lee Dorsey and countless others shape the landscape of modern New Orleans music. His collaborations with pop artists like Labelle ("Lady Marmalade"), Paul McCartney and Elvis Costello cement his importance in the canon of popular music culture. Toussaint's death is a huge loss to the music world-at-large in any genre, and I hope his work continues to receive even greater analysis and appreciation."

Jesse McBride, director of jazz combos and tutor in jazz piano in the [Newcomb Department of Music](#), says, "He was a piano professor and giant in New Orleans. The master musician left his mark on the world many times over."