



## POLAR MUSIC PRIZE

Ray Charles, Polar Music Prize Laureate 1998

The 1998 Polar Music Prize goes to pianist, singer, arranger and composer Ray Charles, one of the leading figures of soul music and an important stylistic innovator with an unusual diversity of musical roots – tapping the principal genres of American music – a man whose presence, ever since the 1950s, has been perceptible behind generations of innumerable pop musicians and singers.

The musical characteristics of his mature style – a continuation of the blues and jazz elements of black music and of the living gospel tradition with its intensity and powerful soul character are already emphatically present in such breakthrough compositions as “I’ve got a woman” (1954). During the 1960s, his focus on the entertainment scene and white his music and quarters but amounted to a major and enduring success with audiences, setting the seal on an important international career.

Ray Charles, with his music and his powerful personal vocal style, has inspired and guided succeeding generations of musicians, and not only in his own country – people like Stevie Winwood, Aretha Franklin and Joe Cocker – in a way which few can rival.

The importance of Ray Charles and his artistry can be summed up in many ways: compelling, expressive and versatile singer and pianist, charismatic stage artist and crowd-puller, ingenious music-maker....But no epithet, probably, could be more accurate and profoundly honourable than that which he has above personified throughout his career, namely “Father of Soul”.