Award-winning international architect Zaha Hadid will receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. unanimously acclaimed by her colleagues, Hadid was the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize, the field’s highest honor. Born in Baghdad and raised in London, she is probably best known for her existing structures including the Vitra Fire Station and Land Formation-One in West am Rhein, Germany, the Strasbourg Tram Station in France, and the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art in Cincinnati. Hadid has won numerous research-based international competitions.

Civil rights leader Dorothy Height will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. For more than half a century, Height’s leadership has advanced the cause of equal rights in the United States. Her appointment as the president of the National Council of Negro Women in 1957 allowed her to work closely with Martin Luther King Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, A. Phillip Randolph and others, participating in virtually every major civil rights and human rights event of the 1960s. Height attended Columbia, and received both her B.A. and M.A. from New York University.

Winter Jhumpa Lahiri, BC’89, will receive the Columbia University Medal for Excellence. Named by The New Yorker as “one of the 20 best writers under the age of 40,” Lahiri is considered a master of the short-story. Her debut book, Interpreter of Maladies, won the Pultizer Prize for Fiction in 2000 and her title story from this collection was named an O. Henry Award and The Best American Short Stories. Lahiri’s first novel, The Namesake, spent 25 weeks on The New York Times’ bestseller list. Lahiri holds master’s degrees and a Ph.D. from Boston University where she has taught creative writing.

Former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, GSAS’77, will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Scowcroft, who has served Presidents Richard Nixon and George H. W. Bush, is now president and founder of The Scowcroft Group, a leading international strategic policy consulting firm. Scowcroft’s extraordinary 29-year military career began with his graduation from West Point and concluded at the rank of lieutenant general, following his service as deputy national security advisor.

Columbia University President Shirley M. Tilghman will receive an honorary Doctor of Science degree. As an exceptional teacher and a world-renowned leader in the field of molecular biology, Tilghman served on the Princeton faculty for 15 years before being named president in 2001. She is known not only for her pioneering research, but also for her national leadership on behalf of women in science. Tilghman has helped launch the careers of many female scholars as a member of the Pew Charitable Trusts Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences Selection Committee and the Lucille P. Markey Charitable Trust Scholar Selection Committee.

Scientist Endel Tulving, who has devoted his career to the study of human memory, will receive an honorary Doctor of Science degree. In 1972, Tulving proposed a distinction between two kinds of long-term cognitive memory, an idea now widely accepted in the scientific community. His more recent research concerns the general notion of multiple memory systems. Tulving is the Tennenbaum Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience at the Rotman Research Institute of Baycrest Center, University of Toronto, as well as a visiting professor of psychology and cognitive neuroscience at Washington University.

Raywheat August Wilson will receive an honorary Doctor of Letters degree. For decades Wilson has been hailed as a seminal talent in the American theater. He is the author of works that explore the history and experience of African-Americans on the American stage in the 20th century, including Jitney, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, Two Trains Running, Seven Guitars, King Hedley II, Gem of the Ocean and Radio Golf. Wilson’s work has garnered numerous awards, including Pulitzer Prizes for Fences and The Piano Lesson.

Traditionally at commencement, Columbia also presents five Teaching Awards. The faculty members to be honored in 2005 are Nicholas J. Dames, associate professor of English and comparative literature; Patrick X. Gallagher, professor of mathematics; Isylda Grohr, professor of philosophy; Bruce G. Link, professor of epidemiology and sociomedical sciences (in psychiatry); and Stanford L. Felder, associate professor of professional practice. Graduate School of Journalism.

More than 30,000 students, alumni, faculty and family are expected at this year’s commencement.

for political action. O’Malley related the story of Charles L. Black, a professor at Columbia Law School, who was on the team that repre- sented the plaintiffs in the historic Brown v. Board of Education case. Black has spoken about the experience of hearing the music of Louis Armstrong for the first time, as a young boy growing up in the South. “Armstrong was the first genius I had seen,” O’Malley quoted Black as saying. “It was a solemn moment being in the presence of a genius, a moment of transcendence when a 14-year-old white boy sees genius in a black man.”

This was an example, O’Malley said, of the “spirit of music demanding action.” In a similar way, O’Malley drew a parallel to a short story by Ellison, “A Couple of Scaredy Cats,” which centers on two preteen boys in Oklahoma who pretend to be Boy Scouts (because blacks were excluded from the organization at the time), and which is interspersed with images and sounds of jazz music. For the characters in this story, jazz becomes “a strategy for survival.” O’Malley said, “an action plan to prevail in an often trouble-some world.” We all need to become improvisers, he added, because it is “who [we] are more likely to survive.”

As such, jazz has played a crucial role in black communities. Jazz parties, O’Malley explained, became “an empowerment zone where the community pulled itself together in dances of stylized courtship, fertility and continuity.” Playing a Louis Armstrong song, “Chantez Les Bas,” O’Malley noted that while the music celebrated the South, making one feel glad to be alive, it also reflected a sense of self-resiliency and a kind of improvisation needed by African-Americans in such a restricted society.

For Ellison, who was the first African-American to win the National Book Award for his 1952 novel Invisible Man, improvised jam sessions allowed musicians to reach beyond their own boundaries as artists, to experiment and to learn by playing with jazz masters. These jam sessions became places where music demanded the action of self-discovery. O’Malley said, becoming a place “where you have to go through the gate and find yourself.” In a similar way of learning from a master and then discovering that one possesses his or her own artistic voice, O’Malley recalled that Ellison scribbled quotes from Ernest Hemingway in the margins of his manuscripts.

In music as in literature, O’Malley believes that this process is related to the ideals espoused by Edward W. Said, the University Professor of English and Comparative Literature who died in 2005. Said, to whom O’Malley dedicated his lecture, urged read- ers to “dive deeply into the art, as if you were making the work your- self,” and by so doing to create what Said called the “heroic read- er,” one who was both receptive and also critically resistant to the work.

In music as in literature, O’Malley concluded, this attitude of “deeply receptive ecstatic read- ing and listening” will lead to a transformation of the self and, in turn, will make the world anew, and into a place more welcoming because “the real secret of the game is to make life swing.”