

The Honorands of The 2011 Commencement

Béla Fleck **Doctor of Music**

The music of banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck transcends traditional categories and the boundaries of international musical styles. A native of New York City, Fleck began playing the banjo at the age of 15. After attending New York City's High School of Music and Art, he began to play with the group Tasty Licks, and released a solo album of progressive bluegrass music in 1979. Fleck played with a number of individual artists and bands (including Spectrum and New Grass Revival), before forming Béla Fleck and the Flecktones in 1988. Each professional collaboration has broadened his remarkable musical range. Over the course of his thirty-year career he has won fourteen Grammy Awards and received thirty nominations. He has been nominated for Grammys in more categories than any other artist in history – including the pop, country, bluegrass, classical, contemporary jazz, world music, spoken-word, composition, and arranging categories. *Throw Down Your Heart* is both an album and an award-winning documentary film that explores the African origins of the banjo with musicians in Uganda, the Gambia, Mali, and Tanzania. The third of Fleck's "Tales from the Acoustic Planet" series, *Throw Down Your Heart* won 2010 Grammy Awards for Best World Music Album and Best Pop Instrumental Performance. He and guest musicians from Africa performed highlights from this project to a full house at Pickard Theater in March 2010.