



Texas Jazz Educators Association Newsletter

Highlighting Jazz Activities in the State of Texas

September 2022



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear TJEA Members,



The school year is upon us and I hope this letter finds you well-rested from a much deserved summer break. As our students return to our classrooms, I am reminded how lucky we are to get to make music and share art with our students and each other. I

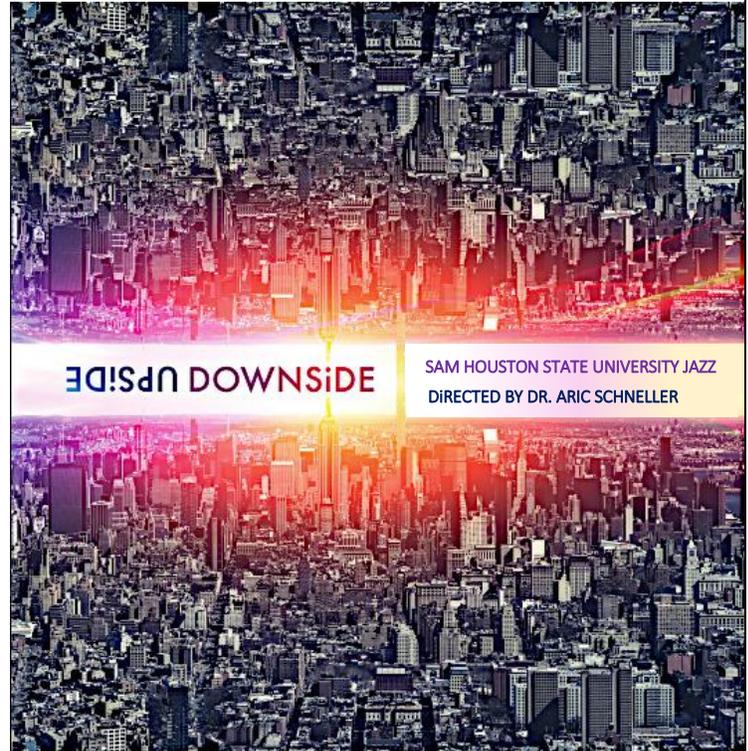
hope you are able to share beautiful moments, great music, and spread joy with your students this school year. It is my sincerest hope that TJEA can assist you in that pursuit.

The TJEA board is comprised of outstanding educators who are excited to support you. Please know that TJEA exists to serve you and we are all an email, text, or phone call away. Congratulations to our newly elected board members – **James Cook**, secretary; **Jesse Espinosa**, president-elect; and **Matthew Sawyer**, director! The future of TJEA is incredibly bright and I can't wait to work alongside them.

As you register for your TMEA convention, please save Wednesday, February 8th for the TJEA Symposium in conjunction with the TMEA clinic. We will have more outstanding sessions just for our TJEA membership. This is one of my favorite events and we hope to see you and your colleagues there!

Keep in touch with the TJEA website for outstanding workshops, camps, and clinics throughout the state. TJEA has several wonderful initiatives aimed at encouraging young musicians and helping teachers of all ages. We hope you will take advantage of these

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SHSU to release latest CD recording project. See pp. 6-8

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contests, scholarships, and other opportunities, and share them with your colleagues who may not know about them!

TJEA exists because of and for you! Please let us know how we can best serve you and our communities. Cheers to an outstanding year of hope and music-making!

Matthew Hedrick

Matthew.Hedrick@wylieisd.net

Have you renewed your TJEA membership?

Please email Heather Mensch at webmaster@tjea.org for your membership renewal link. Include your full name in the request. If you still have your membership link from last year, you may use that link to complete your transaction in PayPal.

MAGNOLIA HIGH SCHOOL JAZZ STUDENTS RETURN FROM TRIUMPHANT TOUR OF NEW YORK CITY

As part of the 21-piece Jazz Houston Youth Orchestra, **Cole Maney** - 2nd tenor saxophone, **Aidan Clark** - lead trombone, and **Andres Larrazabal** - lead trumpet, participated in a five-day residency, June 13 through 17, in New York City. The youth orchestra was under the direction of **Vincent Gardner**, lead trombonist of *Jazz at Lincoln Center*.

The residency included performances at the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, two sets of music at Dizzy's Club inside Jazz at Lincoln Center, guided tours of the Julliard School of Music, a performance at the Manhattan School of Music, a brass masterclass with **Kenny**

Rampton, trumpet section member of Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and a two-hour masterclass with **Wynton Marsalis**, artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

In addition, the group enjoyed live performances of the NY Philharmonic, intimate jazz sets at Birdland and The Django clubs, along with sightseeing tours of the Statue of Liberty and all the pasta and pizza today's youth can devour.

These young artists conducted themselves in a most professional manner and played their hearts out. "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for our gifted students and I am so happy and proud of them" said **Mr. Robert "Bob" Medina**, director of band at Magnolia HS. 🎷🎷



(L to R) Cole Maney (tenor saxophone/clarinet), Aidan Clark (lead trombone), Andres Larrazabal (lead trumpet).

Magnolia High School trombonist awarded membership in Jazz at Lincoln Center's Summer Jazz Academy (SJA)

2-week residential high school summer jazz academy (SJA) for advanced study in jazz performance took place July 17 - 30, 2022 at Bard College.

Aidan Clark, Senior Class of 2023, TMEA All-State trombonist, lead trombonist for the Jazz Houston Youth Orchestra and the Magnolia HS Jazz Ensemble, is a three-year member of the Magnolia HS band program (www.magnoliahsband.org). In addition to his dedication to jazz, Aidan began marching drum corps in the summer after 7th grade. Aidan currently leads a jazz combo with a weekly residency on Thursday evening in Magnolia. "This young, talented, and inquisitive musician is a joy to teach" says director of bands **Mr. Robert "Bob" Medina**.

Rodney Whitaker, Professor of Jazz Bass and Director of Jazz Studies at Michigan State University, directed Aidan's big band for two weeks while **Ted Nash**, long-standing member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, taught Aidan's combo for a week.

Jazz at Lincoln Center's Summer Jazz Academy is the premier high school program for advanced high school jazz students. This two-week program, designed and instructed by a select team of faculty, serves as a rigorous training institute for 42 of the most advanced and dedicated high school jazz students (grades 9-12). Students participate in one of two big bands, multiple performing small combos, receive private lessons, and experience classes in aesthetics, culture, history, performance practice, and pedagogy. Thanks to **Todd Stoll**, Vice President of Education at Jazz at Lincoln Center, for promoting the SJA and guiding and encouraging the next generation of jazz artists. 🎷



Come on! You know you want to!

All the cool programs are doing it!

Apply for a TJEA grant!

TJEA provides jazz grants for Elementary, Middle School, and High School Programs. The grants have been increased to \$400 and will go to at least 10 school programs for clinicians, educational materials, or other program needs.

The deadline to apply has been extended to October 15!

You must be a member of TJEA to apply.

Go to the [TJEA website](#) and from the 'Resources' tab, scroll down to 'Grants'.



LAMAR UNIVERSITY

MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM™

Save the date!

Lamar University Jimmy Simmons Jazz Festival

April 1, 2023

Lamar University is proud to announce the 4th annual Jimmy Simmons Jazz Festival scheduled for Saturday, April 1, 2023. Special guests for the event will be 17-time Grammy nominated **Yellowjackets**, featuring music from their most recent release:



YELLOWJACKETS ARE:

Russell Ferrante: Piano & Synthesizers

Bob Mintzer: Woodwinds & EWI

Will Kennedy: Drums

Dane Alderson: Bass

Throughout their storied 43-year history, the Yellowjackets have recorded 25 albums, received 17 Grammy® nominations (won 2), performed countless sold-out tours, and enjoyed worldwide critical acclaim and commercial success.

The Yellowjackets formed in the late 1970's as the backup band for guitarist **Robben Ford**. They recorded their first album together in 1980. Shortly after that recording, however, Ford decided to part ways and go in a different musical direction. As a result, the modern day Yellowjackets were formed — a trio with **Russell Ferrante**, **Jimmy Haslip** and **Ricky Lawson**. Since then, and with the addition of

Bob Mintzer, the Yellowjackets have gained and maintained prominence as one of jazz's most influential and loved groups.

Over the years the band has undergone numerous lineup changes. Never failing to rise to the inevitable challenges of adjustment, the Yellowjackets - Russell Ferrante, **William Kennedy**, and Bob Mintzer - have maintained an extraordinarily high quality of musicianship that is the rival of many but a surprise to no one who knows and appreciates the band and their music.

Continued...

The most recent addition to the band adds Australian bass player **Dane Alderson** into the mix. With his exceptional rhythmic sensibility and natural disposition toward groove, Dane brings a new energy to the band and adds a youthful approach to the music. Check out their live concert with the WDR Big Band [here](#).



The Lamar University Jimmy Simmons Jazz Festival is non-competitive educational exchange open to all secondary school and community college combos and big bands. More information will be sent out in the fall semester, but entry fees will include all clinics, recording and photo of school bands, awards, plus **FREE** tickets to the evening concert with the Yellowjackets at the beautiful Jefferson Theatre in downtown Beaumont.



ALSO, saxophone great, **Jeff Coffin**, will be appearing at Lamar on Thursday, October 13 for a clinic and concert with the Cardinal Jazz Orchestra.

Jeff is a globally celebrated saxophonist, composer, educator, and is a member of the legendary U.S. rock group, [Dave Matthews Band](#). You may also know him from his 14 years, and 3 Grammy Awards, with the genre-defying [Bela Fleck & the Flecktones](#). Jeff fronts numerous groups when not touring with DMB and has released 17+ solo CD's on [Ear Up Records](#).

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Coffin is known for his musical passion, his deep commitment to music education, and his continued dedication to improvisational music.

Jeff is also a Yamaha Performing Artist & Clinician, a [Boston Sax Shop Ambassador](#), teaches improvisation at the prestigious Vanderbilt University, authored numerous music books, authored a children's book, produces, engineers, mixes, draws, and runs his own critically acclaimed record label, [Ear Up Records](#).

Both the Jimmy Simmons Jazz Festival and Jeff Coffin concert and clinic are FREE and open to the public. For more info contact **Rick Condit** at rcondit@lamar.edu

ED!SdN DOWNSiDE

The latest recording project from Sam Houston State's Jazz Ensemble

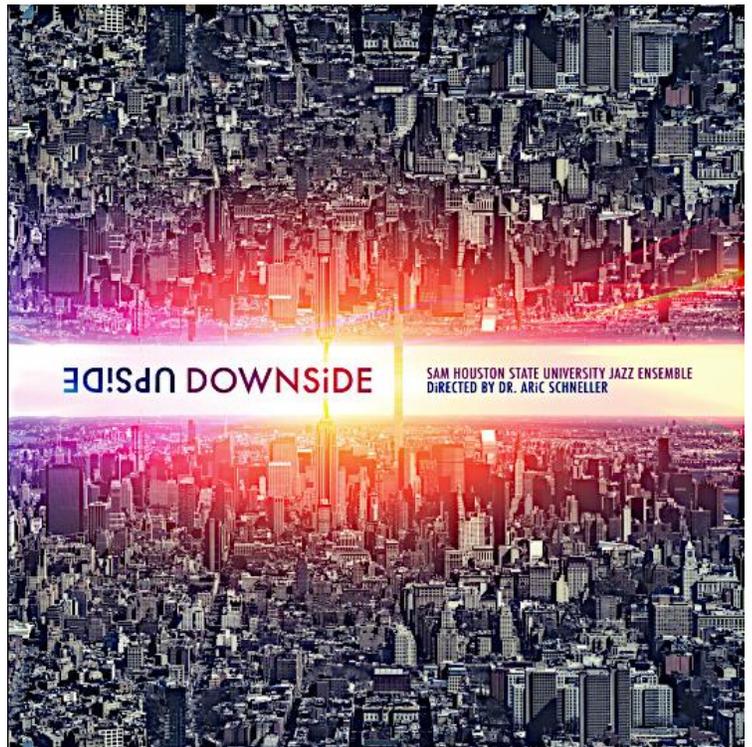
Since I was hired in 2008, the SHSU Jazz Ensemble has recorded three live CDs from our performances at TMEA in 2012, the Midwest Clinic in Chicago in 2014, and TMEA again in 2016 as the featured opening concert in the Lila Cockrell Theatre. This current effort represents our seventh studio recording.

During my advanced studies at the University of North Texas, my mentors impressed upon me the importance of teaching the art of producing studio recordings to the next generation of jazz musicians. From both a professional and educational standpoint, the art of recording is unique and special to the history of jazz.

Unlike western European music, which is mostly preserved via written mediums, the inception of jazz and recording technology were coincidentally conceived nearly at the same time. Contrary to most western European music, the practitioners, enthusiasts, and listeners of jazz have always known what this music sounds like from recordings. Since jazz is foundationally an aural art form, the art of recording complements it beautifully. Our university students even took it upon themselves to transcribe and study classic solos to better inform their improvisational interpretations on this recording.

Investing in and producing this work of our students is a cornerstone of my responsibilities as Director of Jazz Studies. This is our most ambitious recording effort to date. The students, my colleagues, and I hope you enjoy the sounds of the spring 2021 SHSU Jazz Ensemble.

Dr. Aric Schneller
Director of Jazz Studies,
Sam Houston State University



Continued...

UPSIDE DOWNSIDE

A WARM BREEZE [7:18]

(Sammy Nestico)
 Oscar Saldaña, piano
 Tyler Barnes, trombone
 David Caceres, guest alto saxophonist
 A Side Music LLC D/B/A Modern Works
 Music Publishing (ASCAP)

UPSIDE DOWNSIDE [8:29]

(Mike Stern, arr. by Steve Wiest)
 Austin Kelton, trombone
 Carlos Leiva, tenor saxophone
 Little Shoes Music (ASCAP)

EASY TO LOVE [4:34]

(Cole Porter, arr. by Charlie Young)
 Saxophone Section
 Joshua Ferrell, drum set
 Chappell & Company (ASCAP)

BEMSHA SWING [6:43]

(Thelonius Monk & Denzil Best,
 arr. by Bill Holman)
 Oscar Saldaña, piano
 Tyler Barnes, trombone
 Joshua Berry, drum set
 Alec Benitez, alto saxophone
 Second Floor Music (ASCAP)

DEARLY BELOVED [3:34]

(Johnny Mercer & Jerome Kern,
 arr. by Fisher Aubrey "Mickey" Tull, Jr.)
 Samuel Hernandez, alto saxophone
 Blaine Sholmire, guitar
 Universal - Polygram International Pub. Inc.
 (ASCAP)

FALLEN ANGELS [5:28]

(Paul Baker)
 Ben King, baritone saxophone
 Baker's Jazz And More (BMI)

PUDDLE JUMPING [8:31]

(Marshall Gilkes)
 Austin Kelton, trombone
 Marshall Gilkes Publications
 (ASCAP)

CASSANDRA [6:37]

(Dave Brubeck, arr. by Marcus
 Printup)
 Oscar Saldaña, piano
 Alex Suarez, trumpet
 Joshua Berry, drum set
 Derry Music Company (ASCAP)

ADMIRAL'S HORN [6:43]

(Nick Lane)
 Alex Suarez, trumpet
 Joshua Berry, synthesizer
 Austin Kelton, trombone
 Alec Benitez, alto saxophone
 Blaine Sholmire, guitar
 BMG Platinum Songs (ASCAP)

[Editor: Following are excerpts from the new SHSU album's liner notes written by **Robert "Doc" Morgan.**]

It's not news to many that Sam Houston State University has had a storied jazz instruction program for decades, but I hope it is news to at least some of *Upside Downside*'s audience, because this would indicate new listeners and fans for the exciting things going on in Huntsville, Texas.

The spark for what would become Sam Houston's jazz program was ignited in 1937 (!), when **Clint Hackney** joined the SH music faculty. A gifted concert and marching band conductor, Hackney soon added a dance band to the campus environment, quite radical for the time. Dubbed "The Houstonians," the band quickly became very popular in Huntsville and environs, at least partly

because many area pro big bands were disappearing with their personnel being absorbed by the approaching WW II.

The absence of males also affected The Houstonians, and in fact the band became "all-girl" for several years during the war. The Female Houstonians gained national attention in 1946 when they were flown to Kearney Army/Air Force Base in Nebraska to perform at the officers' New Year's Dance. Membership in The Houstonians was never 'for credit' during Dr. Hackney's tenure, but the simple existence of an excellent big band on campus no doubt helped nurture the environment to

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welcome SH's adoption of jazz/big band music for serious study.

In the fall of 1957, **Fisher Tull** (known as **Mickey** to his friends) joined the SH faculty as Director of Jazz Studies, though that title did not exist at the time. Throughout the '50s, Mickey, a trumpet player and arranger, had been THE star of the landmark jazz program at North Texas

State Teachers College and

it was quite a coup for SH music director **Dr. William F. "Bill"**

Lee, later of

University of Miami fame, to lure

Mickey to Huntsville after

Mickey received his North Texas master's degree. The effect was instantaneous.

I was present for the inaugural SH school jazz festival in the winter of 1958 as a high school student. My mind's ear clearly recalls the excellence of Mickey's playing/arranging and the pro-caliber of The Houstonians under Mickey's direction. I was delighted to see one of his North Texas-era charts included on this recording! Incidentally, the SH school jazz festival, now The SHSU Bill Watrous Jazz Festival, is easily the longest running such event in the state and perhaps in the U.S.! It will celebrate its 65th anniversary in April 2023.

Under Mickey's leadership, the national reputation of SH's jazz/dance band program quickly grew, attracting the likes of trumpeter **Don Rader** and tenor saxophonist/composer **Jerry Coker**. It's my understanding that Jerry's SH master's thesis formed the core of his universally lauded book, *Improvising Jazz*. When Mickey shifted his

professorial interests to theory/composition, Jerry became SH jazz director. Having heard Jerry's 'Houstonians' at least twice, I can assure that the Tull-era excellence continued...and since Jerry's tenure, the program has continued to prosper under a succession of superb directors, culminating in the arrival of the marvelous **Dr. Aric Schneller** in 2008.

To coin a phrase, *it takes a village to make a jazz ensemble album*, and hats off to Dr. Schneller, the chief of the *Upside Downside* village. From his extensive, impressive résumé, I know he is most proud to acknowledge his many successful ex-students, so I will

close by listing three with whom I am

very familiar: **Daniel DuFour**, drums (SHSU '11), currently the busiest freelance drummer in Austin. **Robby Yarber**, trumpet (SHSU '12), lead trumpet - North Texas One O'Clock, Disney All-American Band, Glenn Miller Orchestra. **Brian Fincher**, trumpet (SHSU '14), lead trumpet - N. Texas One O'Clock, Disney All-American Band, and currently adjunct jazz trumpet professor at SHSU.

Upside Downside is the 7th studio album recorded by the Sam Houston Jazz Ensemble under Aric's direction. Knowing him as I do, somewhere in his brain, he is already plotting number eight! I am sure we all eagerly await that release...

-Robert "Doc" Morgan

Director of Jazz Studies Emeritus

Kinder HSPVA, Houston

SHSU Director of Jazz Studies, 1974-1976

SHSU theory/comp. professor, 1965-1974

To purchase a copy of the
CD download, contact
SHSU jazz director, Dr.
Aric Schneller at
schneller@shsu.edu

*** **SAVE THE DATE !!** ***

**The 2023 SHSU Bill Watrous Jazz Festival will be Friday
and Saturday, March 31st and April 1st of 2023.
The featured guest artist will be Allen Vizzutti!**

Searching for the Right Mouthpiece

by Mike Vax



First of all, let's get one thing straight: there is no dream mouthpiece! There is no mouthpiece that is going to make anyone play and feel better overnight. Because the body goes through changes every day, playing a wind instrument cannot feel good all the time. Some days a person's playing feels great and other days it might feel downright horrible. The secret is to make your playing sound good every day, no matter how you feel. Working for consistency is an important part of becoming a reliable player.

Too many trumpet players search all their lives for the "right" mouthpiece. They might change mouthpieces every six months or carry five or six mouthpieces with them all the time, trying to figure out which one is best.

Some players change mouthpieces for every different type of playing requirement. The high note mouthpiece, the orchestra mouthpiece, the combo mouthpiece, the section playing mouthpiece, the solo mouthpiece, the lead mouthpiece. Where does it all end? I do agree that many players may need to have different equipment for some different types of playing but playing mouthpieces that are wildly different and switching constantly can actually hurt one's consistency and endurance, in my opinion. The best way to use more than one mouthpiece effectively is to either have custom made mouthpieces that are consistent as far as the rim and width, or use a system such as the Warburton System, where you can change cup depths and backbores, but keep the exact same rim and change other aspects of the overall mouthpiece.

I have used the same basic mouthpiece for the past 40 years. There have been some minor refinements over the years, but no drastic changes. Most of my life I have done all my playing on one mouthpiece. I have always felt that you should change your APPROACH to different types of music, not just switch mouthpieces constantly. Using say, a Bach 1 ½ C for classical playing and a Schilke 13A4a for jazz lead playing is just too much of a transformation for your chops to handle. Everything is different about them.

If you are playing the Hummel Concerto, you use a whole different approach to the horn than if you are playing lead in a big band. You THINK differently. I use my mind like a computer. If I am playing in an orchestra, I put the orchestral program in the computer. If I am playing in a jazz combo, then the jazz combo program goes in. It also helps to have practiced and listened to recordings in each style that you are called upon to perform. Another way to put it is that you lock the stylistic approach you need into your mind.

My belief in mouthpiece size is much different than some teachers that I meet. They will instruct a student to play bigger and bigger mouthpieces. My feeling is that you should play the smallest mouthpiece that is comfortable for you and gives you the sound, endurance and flexibility that you want. Notice that I did NOT say to play a "small" mouthpiece. If a 3C works well for you, why keep trying to get bigger and end up with a 1C or something similar? Many times, especially in high school situations, I see young players forced to play mouthpieces that are so big that they get discouraged because they have no endurance or range. The other thing that gets to me, is seeing a high school trumpet section where all the students are forced to play the same huge mouthpiece. Some teachers have the mistaken impression that if all the students play the same mouthpiece, they will sound the same. My answer to that is simply.....WRONG!! Everyone is different and must be allowed to use equipment that complements their individual musculature and playing characteristics.

A larger mouthpiece does not necessarily give you a bigger sound and a smaller mouthpiece does not necessarily give you a smaller sound. "Larger equals darker and smaller equals brighter" might be a simplified way of putting it. I have heard some fantastic lead trumpet players that use small mouthpieces and have huge sounds!

Other situations where different mouthpieces are required are: playing higher pitched horns such as Eb or Piccolo, playing cornet, and playing flugelhorn. These require different cup depths and even different cup shapes, as well as

throat and backbore differences. The cornet and flugelhorn work much better with a V-shaped cup for the sound that is desirable from those horns. Again, my cornet and flugelhorn mouthpieces have the same rim as my trumpet mouthpieces.

The flugelhorn presents a special challenge in that it is NOT a trumpet and should not be approached like one. It needs a much deeper “V” cup and usually a more open throat and backbore. Flugelhorn should be played with a lighter “touch” than a trumpet and played with even more finesse. It should be played more “tenderly” to bring out its wonderful dark sound.

In choosing a mouthpiece or even a series of mouthpieces, first decide what kinds of playing you do most. A person leaning towards big band lead playing would certainly not use as deep a mouthpiece as someone who is leaning towards being a symphonic musician. The mouthpiece must enable a player to do his or her job as comfortably and consistently as possible. 🎵

STAN KENTON LEGACY ORCHESTRA 2023 TOUR

The Stan Kenton Legacy Orchestra will finally be touring again in 2023! Band leader, **Mike Vax**, says, “The tour will happen between April 10th and April 30th. The actual length of each tour depends on how many dates are booked. I’m looking at a wide area to start with and will pare it down as dates come in. Midwest, Texas, Central and Southeast. Please get back to me if you have any interest at all. Remember that any school that books the SKLO for an evening performance, gets a FREE afternoon clinic from the whole band. We are open to any type of venue that would be interested, and yes, we also have a dance book.”

Contact and Information:

www.friendsofbigbandjazz.com

Vaxtrpts@aol.com

925-872-1942



All-State Workshops this month at UT Tyler

The University of Texas at Tyler is excited to again offer our annual All-State Workshops for band, strings, and jazz! The workshops are **FREE** to participants and not only focus on successful preparation of the All-State materials, but also provide instrument-specific instruction from our fantastic faculty!

On Saturday, September 10, the TMEA All-State Band etudes will be covered from 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. with the ATSSB etudes covered from 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The All-State String Workshop is on 9/11/22 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. and offered in partnership with the East Texas Youth Orchestra.

On Saturday, September 17, the TMEA All-State Jazz Workshops will run 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. with the ATSSB etudes covered from 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

In addition, each session will conclude with a campus tour!

Registration for all workshops can be found [here](#). If you are bringing a bus of students please contact **Dr. Sarah Roberts** (sroberts@uttyler.edu) for special instructions.



BAND
Workshop

Saturday, September 10, 2022

TMEA Etudes 9:00 am - 11:30 am	ATSSB Etudes 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm
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2022
All-State
Workshops



*Scan code
to register!*

STRINGS
Workshop

Sunday, September 11, 2022
4:30 pm - 6:30 pm

In partnership with **EAST TEXAS**
YOUTH ORCHESTRA

JAZZ
Workshop

Saturday, September 17, 2022

TMEA Etudes 9:00 am - 11:30 am	ATSSB Etudes 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm
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Workshops are FREE and open to
High School students grades 9-12.

uttyler.edu/music

C.O.M. JAZZ ENSEMBLE

In Texas City the College of the Mainland Jazz Ensemble continues to operate, now as a Lifelong Learning Class. It is now a part of the college's Continuing Education Division. This will be the ensemble's 41st year under the direction of **Sparky Koerner**. Sparky retired as a full-time instructor at COM last August. Sparky said, "We had an excellent group of musicians last semester and I'm looking forward to most of them returning. That really adds to the consistency of the musical quality of the ensemble."

The jazz ensemble will schedule a few concerts throughout the fall with the first one being October 18th and another on December 6th. The venue is still to be determined and they may perform off campus, which the ensemble did a few times last year and was able to develop some new audience members. "Getting the group out into the community is an important way to spread the sounds of jazz", said Sparky.

Sparky keeps an email list to send out notices of upcoming concerts. If you would like to be included on the list, send an email request to skoerner@com.edu



Jazz Express

Sparky continues to perform with the Jazz Express as a duet, trio or quartet depending on the venue and occasion. Two places you can hear him on a regular basis is at the Tremont House Hotel in Galveston on Friday evenings from 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm. They play in the newly remodeled lobby area by the Toujouse Bar. In the Dickinson area they perform for the Sunday Jazz Brunch from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm at Marais Restaurant. Great food and wonderful atmosphere. Sparky advises, "It's best to make reservations. It is a very popular place."



Forming the Curt Wilson Alumni Band

by Dr. Skip Dolt



Curt Wilson Alumni Jazz Ensemble at the Heineken Jazzaldia Festival in San Sebastian, Spain. July 2019.

When **Curt Wilson** retired from his position as Director of Jazz Studies/Professor of Theory/Composition at Texas Christian University in 2011, there was much to celebrate about his 35-year career at the university. Curt Wilson was synonymous with TCU Jazz and an ambassador for the program and the University. Curt Wilson was recently inducted into the Texas Jazz Educators Association (TJEA) Hall of Fame.

A group of his former students was looking for a way to honor their mentor. As many retirement party options were being discussed, an idea emerged to form an alumni jazz band to perform for the event. The idea caught on, but logistical questions remained.

Then, **Bobby Francis**, Director of Bands at TCU, offered an intriguing invitation. Mr. Francis was serving as artistic director for a concert band tour the following summer with scheduled performances in London and a special July 4th concert at The American Cemetery at Omaha Beach in Normandy. The alumni jazz band could be added to the tour and the retirement party could also become a unique travel and performance opportunity! Emails were sent. Phone calls were made. Soon, an enthusiastic 18-member big band was assembled.

The make-up of the band was as interesting as it was fun. There were alumni from each of the four decades of Curt's career, including one alumnus from his first year at TCU and one from his last. The band included professional performers, music educators, physicians, a dentist, a college professor, business executives from Lockheed Martin and Southwest Airlines..... but all had one thing in common: a love of jazz music inspired by their retiring professor.

The band was assembled for a few days of pre-trip rehearsals in June 2012. Members came from Texas and as far as Los Angeles, Chicago, and Atlanta. For some, this was a cherished reunion to play with college friends they hadn't seen in decades. Others met for the first time, sharing their experiences playing in the same program, but at different points in history. As was the case decades earlier, rehearsals included a healthy dose of laughter.

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The 2012 tour included performances at the Royal College of Music in London and a performance in Old Spitalfields Market in East London. Then the band ferried across the English Channel to participate in a special July 4th concert at The American Cemetery at Omaha Beach in Normandy.

The joy and excitement of that tour was slow to wear off. While the 2012 trip had been conceived as a retirement party, everyone had such a wonderful time that some members had inquired about another trip in the future. A couple of years later, an email inquiry went out to the group from **Todd Burrer**, trombone player and group organizer, to gauge interest in another tour. The idea appealed to everyone, including Curt.



With a few new faces, the 2015 Curt Wilson Alumni Band sent audition materials and was invited to perform at the prestigious Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy and The Jazz a Juan Festival in Antibes France. The band enjoyed tours of the Vatican and ancient Rome, the walled town of Perugia, Orvieto, Assisi, the beautiful seaside town of Santa Margherita and the cities of Nice and Antibes on the French Riviera. Along the way, we also performed in a small French town, St. Sauveur Sur Tinee on Bastille Day, when the mayor of the city joined us on piano for *Les Marseilles*! The 2015 trip not only recaptured the magic of the first tour but added the experience of playing at some of Europe's most prestigious jazz festivals.



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Umbria Jazz Festival, Perugia, Italy





In 2019, The Curt Wilson Alumni Band formed its third iteration and prepared for a tour of Portugal and Spain. After rehearsals in Ft. Worth, the band toured Lisbon (where we performed and mentored a group of young musicians), Porto (appearance in a famous jazz club), Cascais, and Tomar in Portugal, and then continued to Salamanca and San Sebastián in Spain. The finale of the trip was performing at the prestigious Heineken Jazzaldia Festival in San Sebastián. With six band members having earned doctorate degrees, Curt enjoyed calling the band the “smartest band he ever directed.”

During the pandemic, The Curt Wilson Alumni Band found a creative way to stay connected and released two virtual YouTube collaborations with musicians recording and submitting their parts to alumnus/trumpet player **Tony Yarbrough** who produced and mixed the collaborative videos of [“Ain’t That a Kick In The Head”](#) and [“Me and Mrs. Jones.”](#) (Editor - Click the links to hear their YouTube virtual performances.)



Continued...

Jazzaldia Festival, San Sebastián, Spain.



In 2021, the band finally had its opportunity to surprise their director as band members from all over the state of Texas, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, and Atlanta joined to perform at a surprise 80th Birthday celebration at the TCU School of Music.

Currently the band is again weighing options for a fourth European tour as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of our first trip!



(Below) Trombonist and trip-planner Todd Burrer (L.) conferring with director Curt Wilson.



Article submitted by Dr. Skip Dolt (right) Trombonist, Dentist Member of 1985 Texas All-State Jazz Ensemble



TJEA NEWSLETTER ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The TJEA Newsletter is compiled in September, November, February, and May. Articles should be sent by email in a Word formatted attachment. Avoid sending PDF files. Transfer them to Word before sending. Photos can be placed in the article or sent as separate JPEG images. Send your information to the newsletter editor, John Goode, at newsletter@tjea.org. Texas Jazz Newsletter reserves the right to approve and edit all materials accepted for distribution.

DEADLINES:	August 20	(September Edition)
	October 20	(Nov. Edition)
	January 20	(Feb. Edition)
	April 20	(May Edition)