

Jazz Forum

By now most of you are aware that the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) ceased to exist as of April of 2008. To many this may represent an end to having a place where educators, students, performers and jazz fans alike could meet at the annual IAJE Conference to exchange ideas, learn about the latest in music technology and above all honor our Jazz Masters. However, for the African American Jazz Caucus, Inc., it represented more than that. It was a place where African American educators and students could gather to address issues and concerns that are unique to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and communities at large. It was also a place to showcase the outstanding talent that is being developed at these institutions and communities. For these reasons, the African American Jazz Caucus, Inc. is more than ever committed to moving forward with its mission of preserving and promulgating jazz. One of the ways that the AAJC aims to communicate its commitment and latest news within our organization will be through this bi-monthly forum. Our thanks go out to *JAZZed* Magazine for granting us this opportunity.

For those who are not yet familiar with us, the Black Jazz Music Caucus (BJMC) was organized in 1977 as an independent affiliate of the National Association of Jazz Educators (NAJE). The two founders were the late Anderson White and Dr. Larry Ridley. The mission and relationship with NAJE were to ensure that the African American jazz community was represented in conference activities. A few years later, NAJE changed the name of the organization to the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE). In 2000, Dr. Larry Ridley was appointed the BJMC Executive Director by its President, Badi Murphy. The membership voted to change the name to the African American Jazz Caucus (AAJC) and Dr. Ridley secured not-for-profit 501c3 status for the AAJC from the IRS, in 2001.

That same year, the AAJC organized the AAJC/HBCU Student All-star Big Band™ to showcase, in an international forum, the outstanding talent that exists and is being cultivated by jazz educators at HBCUs. Band members are selected via an annual blind audition conducted by an independent panel of jazz profes-



sionals/educators. The process is managed by the AAJC HBCU Jazz Directors Committee- Dr. Russell Thomas, Chairman, Jackson State University; Dr. Ira Wiggins, Vice Chairman, North Carolina Central University; Dr. Howard Harris, Texas Southern University; Professor James Patterson, Clark Atlanta University; Dr. John Lamkin, University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Professor James Holden, Virginia State University. If selected, the students are given the opportunity to perform at high visibility venues, during the academic year. The band's first performance was at the 2002 IAJE conference in Long Beach, CA. Jazz Legend, Gerald Wilson was the conductor. He is now our Conductor Emeritus and a recipient of the NEA Jazz Master Award.

The participation in the blind auditions for the HBCU Big Band has grown to include students from as many as fifteen HBCUs. In the Fall of 2007, 52 students auditioned for the 2008 Band. They represented the following institutions:

Hampton University (VA), Elizabeth City State University (NC), Lincoln University (PA), Morehouse College (GA), Fayetteville State University (NC), Jackson State University (MS), Texas Southern University (TX), North Carolina Central University (NC), University of Maryland Eastern Shore (MD), Clark Atlanta University (GA), South Carolina State University (SC), and North Carolina A & T State University (NC).

Featured guest soloists with the band have included stellar jazz artists, Ed Thigpen; Jimmy Owens; Marcia Miget; Joe Chambers, Oliver Lake and NEA Jazz Masters Jimmy Heath and Jimmy Cobb. AAJC Board member, Professor Larry Dwyer, Director of

Jazz Studies and Assistant Director of Bands, University of Notre Dame, facilitated the band's performances in 2006 and 2008 at the 48th and 50th anniversaries of the Notre Dame Collegiate Jazz Festival. Since 2006, noted bassist, arranger, composer, Artistic Director, John Clayton has granted scholarships, to selected outstanding student members of the band to attend the Summer Centrum Jazz Workshop, in Port Townsend, WA. The AAJC Jazz Dance Band began under the direction of the legendary saxophonist and arranger Jimmy Coe. The current director is David Hardiman, Professor of Music, Emeritus, City College of San Francisco. For many years, the AAJC Jazz Dance was always a standing room only highlight of the IAJE Conferences. In addition, the AAJC ProJam Session, at the IAJE Conferences, always served as memorial tributes. The purpose was to acknowledge noted jazz legends that passed during the previous year.

AAJC also produced an annual jazz presentation with a religious theme as the final event of the IAJE Conferences. The purpose was to emphasize the role of the church in the spiritual roots and heritage of the African Diaspora. The service has featured major works by Dr. Willis Kirk, President Emeritus, City College of San Francisco; Dr. Howard Harris, Texas Southern University; singer, Ruth Naomi Floyd and Dr. William Smith, North Carolina Central University.

Noted AAJC member jazz photographer Jim Alexander's creative work has become a staple at AAJC events. His work can be seen at www.jimalexanderphotography.com

The AAJC presented outstanding panels and workshops at the IAJE Conferences featuring, NEA Jazz Master, Barry Harris; Dr. James Ammons, former Chancellor of North Carolina Central University, now President of Florida A&M; Dr. Karen Chandler, College of Charleston, SC, and noted journalist, Jack McCray, Charleston

Post & Courier. Performance appearances throughout the conferences were given by NEA Jazz Masters Billy Higgins, Frank Foster, Ron Carter, Dr. David Baker, Jimmy Cobb and jazz artists Cedar Walton, Stanley Turrentine, Hank Marr, the Harlem Renais-

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sance Band, Everett Green, and Jamey Aebersold.

In 2006, Dr. Larry Ridley and Dr. James Ammons, then Chancellor of North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC, conceived the idea of creating the first Jazz Research Institute and Jazz Hall of Fame at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The project was approved by the NCCU Board of Governors, in the spring of 2007.

The First Annual North Carolina Central University/African American Jazz Caucus Jazz Research Institute (NAJRI), HBCU Jazz Conference/Festival, was held June 20 – 23, 2007, in Durham. Among the outstanding participants were writer, A.B. Spellman, pianist Kenny Barron and trumpeter Jimmy Owens.

The Second Annual Conference was held April 16 – 19, 2008. Noted participants included NEA Jazz Masters, Dr. Billy Taylor and Dan Morgenstern. The AAJC also produced the First Annual NAJRI Jazz Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at the Conference on April 17, 2008. The inductees were: John Coltrane; the Honorable Congressman John Conyers, Jr.,

(D-MI); Lou Donaldson; Tal Farlow; Albert Heath; Jimmy Heath; Percy Heath; Thelonious Sphere Monk; Max Roach; Nina Simone and Dr. Billy Taylor. Outstanding music for this celebration was provided by the Cedar Walton Trio. The legendary pianist was accompanied by David Williams, contrabass and George Fludas, drums.

The AAJC is actively involved in supporting the initiatives espoused in House Concurrent Resolution 57, "...it is the sense of the Congress that Jazz is hereby designated as a rare and valuable national American treasure to which we should devote our attention, support and resources to make certain it is preserved, understood and promulgated." This Resolution was introduced by the Honorable Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) and Senator Allen Cranston (D-CA). It was passed unanimously by both Houses of Congress in 1987. As a part of this effort, AAJC Executive Director, Dr. Larry Ridley served as the moderator of the 2007 Jazz Issues Panel and as a panelist in 2008 at the Congressional Black Caucus Conferences, in Washington, DC.

This year, the AAJC, in partnership with the Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library, will mark the beginning of Black History month by presenting the 2009 AAJC/HBCU Student All-star Big Band in concert. The performance will take place at 3:00 p.m., Sunday, February 1st in the Schomburg Langston Hughes Auditorium, 135th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard. Please join us in celebrating Black History Month, in Harlem!

Tickets: Members, \$16; Non Members, \$20. For ticket charge call the Schomburg Shop at (212) 491-2206.

Working together works!

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