

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

World-class jazz

U of L plays host to prestigious global gathering next week

By Jeffrey Lee Puckett

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For the past decade, the profile of the University of Louisville's School of Music has risen steadily among jazz educators, and its Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies program is now considered one of the nation's strongest.

That reputation will get an enormous boost next week when the School of Music and the Jazz Studies program play host to the 16th annual International Association of Schools of Jazz meeting. More than 100 participants from 19 countries are expected to attend the June 25-30 meeting.

U of L is only the third school in the United States to hold the event, after New York's New School (1995) and Boston's Berklee School of Music (2001). Other meetings have been held in such locales as France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Ireland and Denmark.

"It is rather special," said Mike Tracy, director of U of L's jazz studies program. "Just having us recognized to do it is a great privilege. This will give us even more credence throughout the world, and in the long run we'll have much greater interaction with schools throughout the world."

Lectures, classes and performances will dominate the meeting, primarily on the Belknap campus. The majority of participants are students, who will be divided into ensembles following a quick audition for an intense week of study and performances.

Several public concerts are scheduled. Many of the participants will stay in town for Aebersold's annual Summer Jazz Workshops, to be held on campus July 2-7 and July 9-14. Tracy also helps organize those workshops, which means a busy summer "vacation" for him and the School of Music staff.

"I've definitely asked them to do more than they usually do during the summer ... but they've all stepped up and are excited about it. It has really been a great effort."

Local roots

Saxophonist David Liebman founded IASJ in 1987 and presided over its first meeting in 1989, in Rottenburg, Germany. He remains its artistic director and is proud that hundreds of students and educators from more than 40 countries and every continent have attended.

"Forming the IASJ ... and being involved with the meetings all these years has been the most gratifying experience of my musical life," the Brooklyn native said via e-mail from Europe, where he was teaching.

"I feel like I made a contribution to the world by bringing like-minded young people together from different cultures."

In a sense, next week's meeting brings the IASJ full circle. In the late 1970s, New Albany saxophonist Aebersold introduced Liebman to the culture of jazz education through his clinics, which he was staging nationwide. Liebman became dedicated to jazz education, leading directly to the IASJ.



IF YOU GO

IASJ's public performances

Next Sunday: Faculty Concert, University of Louisville's Comstock Concert Hall, 7:30-10 p.m., free.

June 26: Jam session, Galt House Atrium, 8-11 p.m., free.

June 27: Argentinian Ensemble, Jazz Cafe at Louisville Free Public Library, 301 York St., 7-9 p.m., free; jam session, Jazz Factory, 815 W. Market St., 8 p.m. to ?, free.

June 29: IASJ Ensemble Concert, Belknap Theatre Playhouse, Cardinal Avenue near Third Street, 8-11 p.m., \$5.

June 30: IASJ Ensemble Concert, Belknap Theatre Playhouse, 8-11 p.m., \$5.

More information: Visit www.louisville.edu/music/jazz/iasj.html



David Liebman founded the IASJ in 1987.

"I look at my long relationship with Jamey as one of the constants in my musical life; we continue to publish new products of mine, and I am always happy to do a day or two at his summer camps," said Liebman, who was in Miles Davis' seminal early-1970s electro-funk band.

Liebman was a veteran educator by 1987, with an international schedule of clinics, when he realized that students in all countries were studying what he calls "a truly universal music" -- but were insulated from one another despite their common language of jazz.

Unification is Liebman's keyword. The IASJ's mission statement says, "Through its core values of freedom of expression, group interaction, shared respect and individual responsibility, jazz embodies the highest ideals of art and human creativity. It has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting harmonious relations across highly diverse cultural boundaries."

The IASJ was patterned after the International Association of Jazz Education, a much larger group founded in 1968. While they share some aspects, the IAJE devotes much of its energies to developing jazz programs in schools and ensuring that jazz is part of curriculums already in place.

The IASJ is more people-oriented, you might say.

"The centerpiece of the meetings is student-to-student contact," Liebman said. "Coming from a country which may have a small jazz scene (compared to the United States), it is important that a young, aspiring musician realize that he is not alone and that people of his (or her) generation are involved with exactly the same material.

"It doesn't matter what language one learns jazz in, since Duke Ellington is Duke no matter where."

Improvisation in action

Tracy was at an IASJ meeting in 2003 when he heard that the host for the 2006 meeting had backed out. He didn't hesitate.

"I said, 'We'll do it.' Very few people knew me there, except Dave was there, and he said, 'Yeah, Mike can take care of it.' The next thing I knew they said, 'Fine, click, it's done,' " Tracy said.

"I had not checked with the school to find out if we had the time or space. I just said we'll do it because I knew that it was a really good opportunity for us."

Like the best improvised solos, Tracy's move fell into place perfectly.

The meeting's dates meshed with Aebersold's workshops, and since the events shared many participants, it meant less travel time for everyone. A previously scheduled visit by four Russian educators also happily coincided with the IASJ, and School of Music Dean Christopher Doane was thrilled by the news.

"This just seemed to be the right thing to do at the right time," Tracy said. "This won't happen again for the University of Louisville, at least not in my lifetime."



A student combo performed at the 2005 meeting in Krakow, Poland. Mike Tracy is director of U of L's jazz studies program.

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