

THE HEART OF THE FESTIVAL

The Healdsburg Jazz Festival has made education a major part of its mission since its inception. In fact, festival founder and Artistic Director, Jessica Felix, calls education “the real heart of the festival.” According to Felix, “the program this year is the biggest ever, with performing and learning opportunities for every child in the community.”

From classes in dance and drumming for the youngest, to hands-on tutoring for high school jazz players, the festival brings professional musicians and educators into area classrooms. Elizabeth Haze Vega, a Healdsburg teacher, author and musician, is effusive in her praise for the festival’s educational mission. “I have taught music in five of our Healdsburg area schools, and I recognize that this wonderful program is unique to our town and is one of the finest cultural gifts Healdsburg offers to her children.”

“Our festival is about so much more than ticket sales,” says Felix. “This is as much about building an audience as it is about teaching young musicians to play.”

Read on for more information about the educational component of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival, the “Heart of the Festival.”

HEALDSBURG JAZZ FESTIVAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Tacuma King performances in the schools

African drum and dance master Tacuma King has been part of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival since it was founded in 1999. King comes to Healdsburg for in-school performances at school assemblies that combine teaching and performance in a dynamic blend of history, music and excitement. King reviews the historically rich cultural influences that have been the catalyst for the progression of jazz. From its beginnings in Africa, to its assimilation into the Caribbean and South American cultures, through its impact on current American culture and music, King introduces students to jazz and its history through lecture, performance and participation. Many students attend the assembly, then sign up for an after-school workshop with Tacuma.

Tacuma King Percussion, Song, and Dance workshops

Children ages six to fourteen experience the history and culture of jazz. This six-week after-school workshop teaches hand drums, dance and song, and the students then perform at a festival event. King is a musical charmer and a master educator. Whether teaching a drum rhythm, a dance step, a chant or a respectful appreciation for the rich and diverse cultures around the world, he always makes it a joyful experience for his students. Many students take the workshops year after year. They might start out ringing a bell or hitting a drum, but they move and progress, and many mature into young percussionists, fearless on stage and in touch with their inner rhythms.

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Operation Jazz Band

Professional musicians, led by Bay Area percussionist and educator Babatunde Lea, spend an intense week in six different area schools. Two troupes of musicians each visit three schools a day for four consecutive days each spring. Beginning with percussion and continuing through rhythm, melody and vocals, every fifth grade student in the area learns about the history and fundamentals of jazz.

The first day of Operation Jazz Band begins with the oldest form of music, drumming and percussion. Schoolrooms are filled with sound and laughter! Students learn call-and-response techniques, and how this form of communication among slaves made its way into jazz music. The second day focuses on the rhythm section. Musicians explain how keyboards and bass anchor a jazz combo, and they always explain each instrument's musical heritage. The third day focuses on horns, with a trumpeter, saxophonist and trombonist going over each instrument's strengths and demonstrating the interplay between the horns as a way to introduce the concepts of chords and harmony. The fourth day features jazz vocalists explaining how the human voice can become a jazz instrument. The children learn a song they can sing along with the band.

The week ends with more than 500 students attending a concert with their new musician friends. In addition to "tying it all together" for each group of students, the concert brings schools – public and private – from all over the community together for a joyous celebration of music. The students have newly-educated ears for jazz, they've learned how to listen to music in a new way, and the roar of sound when their musician-teachers take the stage is astonishing! The concert reviews everything they've learned, and the children sing, clap hands and call out on cue. By the end of the concert, the students are chanting "... I ... LOVE ... JAZZ!" in a joyous affirmation of the universal power of music.

"Children often stop me on the street to talk about their experience with Operation Jazz Band," says festival founder and artistic director Jessica Felix. "The musicians engage the students and interest them in an art form they previously had little or no knowledge of. For a week each year, the children learn about each instrument and the person who plays it. When they attend the concert at the end of the week, they have a personal attachment to the group and for that reason enjoy and appreciate the music much more."

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Oaktown Jazz Workshop

Each year, the Healdsburg Jazz Festival brings Khalil Shaheed and the Oaktown Jazz Workshop to work with Healdsburg High School jazz players on musicianship and improvisation. The Oaktown Jazz Workshop musicians are the elite of Bay Area jazz musicians, coming here each year because they believe in the festival's mission to support and educate young jazz players. A significant aspect of the Oaktown experience is the one-on-one mentoring that Healdsburg High students receive from professional musicians. For a young jazz musician, this is the real deal! In addition, Shaheed and HHS music teacher Randy Masselink will prepare the students for the June 4 Healdsburg Jazz Festival concert at the Raven Theater.

"Every year these workshops give our kids the unique chance to work with musicians who are out there working professionally," says Masselink. "These are experiences that are invaluable as a teaching and motivational tools, and they also allow the kids to meet these people personally and get to know them in a much more realistic way than just watching them perform somewhere."

Masselink adds: "The musicians have so much good advice, and are typically great role models for the kids, so the workshops become highlights of the school year. These are experiences that really stick with the kids and mean something to them."

Sarah Wilson workshops

Healdsburg native Sarah Wilson graduated from Healdsburg High School in 1986. A former member herself of the Healdsburg High Jazz Band, Wilson has gone on to world renown as a composer, trumpeter and vocalist. Hailed as "one of the most intriguing and promising composers and trumpeters on the contemporary music scene" (*Derk Richardson, San Francisco Chronicle*) Wilson will conduct four workshops with the HHS Jazz Band this spring, and teach the band to play one of her original compositions.

Performances/lectures for middle school and high school assemblies

These events showcase professional musicians who connect with students on many levels. Combining stellar musicianship and engaging storytelling, the musicians have introduced local students to jazz history, jazz styles, the connection between jazz and blues, and much more. Performers have included Ed Kelly, Charlie Musselwhite, Julian Lage, John Santos, Richard Howell, Babatunde Lea, Khalil Shaheed, and Angela Wellman.

This spring, musician, historian, and educator John Santos will present special programs at every middle school and high school student in the area. His presentation focuses on the music and history of Latin Jazz. His encyclopedic knowledge of jazz roots and influences and his excellent troupe of musicians provide a lively and

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educational experience. Santos will also play at the festival's *Latin Jazz on the Green* concert. In addition, Santos will host a *History of Latin Jazz* presentation (aimed at adults) one evening at the Raven Film Center.

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Jazz Festival Musicians in the Schools

To augment our efforts to foster appreciation of the jazz art form among young people, Healdsburg Jazz Festival headliners often arrive prior to the festival, or stay a few days after, to visit and perform in local schools. Past participants include Billy Higgins, Charles Lloyd, Delfeayo Marsalis, John Abercrombie, Julian Lage, Chico Freeman, Billy Hart, Herlan Riley, George Coleman, and Harold Mabern.

Healdsburg High School Jazz Band — Past and Present

The Healdsburg High School Jazz Band has inspired hundreds of young musicians. On Wednesday, June 4, a special concert will be held during the Healdsburg Jazz Festival to honor the legacy and potential of the HHS Jazz Band. Featuring 30 current Jazz Band members and a dozen alumni, the concert will celebrate this unique musical education opportunity. In preparation for the concert, members of the HHS Jazz Band will benefit from workshops led by professional musicians, sponsored by the jazz festival.

The June 4 concert will open with a group performance by HHS Jazz Band alumni. Following the alumni performance, the current HHS Jazz Band will perform three pieces conducted by Masselink and Khalil Shaheed of the Oaktown Jazz Workshop. As the fourth piece, the HHS Jazz Band will perform the original composition they have been taught by HHS alumni Sarah Wilson. The evening will close with a performance by Sarah Wilson's quintet, the "Trapeze Project" with Myra Melford, Ben Goldberg and Matt Wilson.

The Healdsburg High School Jazz Band has made an indelible mark on hundreds of young musicians, many of whom found something special in jazz. "I hated high school, but being in the jazz band got me out of bed in the morning. Playing jazz boosted my self-esteem, it gave me confidence," said HHS Jazz Band alumni Claire Anderson, who used some of that confidence to win a coveted position as a Congressional Page in Washington DC after high school.

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Don Byron's *Bug Music for Families*

The Healdsburg Jazz Festival is bringing the jazz experience to grade school children and their families across Sonoma County by presenting Don Byron's *Bug Music for Families*, on Monday June 2 at Healdsburg's Raven Theater. This will be a family concert with parents and children experiencing this wonderful performance together.

Bug Music is aimed at children 7 and over —and at the kid in all of us. Inspired by Don Byron's best-selling 1996 *Bug Music* album, this fun-filled and fascinating program unites live jazz, classic cartoons, and historic film footage in a one-of-a-kind exploration of the Swing Era. Originally commissioned by the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and produced in a two-week run at Broadway's New Victory Theater, *Bug Music for Juniors* spotlights works by three great composers of the Swing Era — Duke Ellington, Raymond Scott, and John Kirby — performed in razor-sharp arrangements by Byron's stellar sextet.

These classic tunes are paired with timeless 'toons from Warner Bros 1940s heyday, along with a wealth of other intriguing and historic visuals. Part concert, part demonstration, part Q&A, and 100 percent pleasure, *Bug Music for Juniors* is jazz education at its most entertaining and exciting. This extremely popular and innovative children's concert will be a completely new way to experience jazz.

Note to editors — please see our *Press Release* and our *Backgrounder*, which provide more information about the festival's history and context. For more details, or to speak to Healdsburg Jazz Festival Founder and Artistic Director Jessica Felix, call 707-433-4633 or email jessicafelix@ap.net. Visits to classrooms can be arranged with prior notice.