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WINNER: SMALL JAZZ COMBO

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Jake Victor '18 and Jack Kilkelly-Schmidt '18

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STUDENT

MUSIC AWARDS



**Super
Achievers**

The Best
Student Musicians
of 2018

Zack Shubert of Carlmont High School in Belmont, California, is the recipient of two Student Music Award honors. See page 100. (Photo: Jeff Bartee)

WELCOME TO THE

41ST ANNUAL DOWNBEAT STUDENT MUSIC AWARDS



Pacific Standard Time from California State University, Long Beach

THE DOWNBEAT STUDENT MUSIC AWARDS

honor the achievements of today's top student musicians and their teachers. The results of this year's 41st edition, presented in the following pages, show jazz education to be in a vibrant state at every stage from junior high to grad school.

Motivated students are digesting more information and playing at higher levels than ever before, thanks in large part to the dedicated educators who set them up for success and the schools that provide them with a proper learning environment. And, as previous editions of the Student Music Awards have proven time and again, these students are going on to do great things. Indeed, the future of jazz finds itself in good hands as this next generation makes its way through the halls of academia and begins to emerge on the scene.

As we bestow honors upon our most promising students, it's important to acknowledge the contributions of exemplary educators who have devoted their lives to preparing students for real-world work as musicians and music business professionals. This year, we are proud to honor two distinguished music teachers with DownBeat's Jazz Education

Achievement award.

Christine Helferich Guter, director of the vocal jazz program at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University, Long Beach since 2002, instills a sense of artistic honesty in her students. Her program has been honored with close to 30 Student Music Awards since 2006.

Cuahtémoc "Moc" Escobedo has directed jazz and concert bands at Seattle's Eckstein Middle School since 1994. He takes an all-inclusive approach to leading student jazz ensembles, one that has garnered 15 Student Music Award honors over the years.

The highest teaching honor this year goes to Davey S. Yarborough, whom we welcome into the DownBeat Jazz Education Hall of Fame. We celebrate his 32-year tenure as jazz studies director and saxophone instructor at Washington D.C.'s Duke Ellington School of the Arts, where he has become a role model of consistency and quality to students who have traveled to perform at prestigious jazz festivals.

Congratulations to all of this year's Student Music Award honorees. We hope you find their stories inspiring, and we bet you'll be hearing a lot more from them in the future. **DB**

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ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:
CUAUHTÉMOC "MOC" ESCOBEDO**

**96 | DOWNBEAT STUDENT MUSIC
AWARDS—COMPLETE RESULTS**

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2018 *DOWNBEAT* STUDENT AWARD WINNERS



**Eastman New
Jazz Ensemble,
Dave Rivello**
Graduate College
Outstanding
Performances

**Jonathan Fagan,
"Legacy (For The
Late Fred Sturm)"
Harold Danko**
Graduate College
Outstanding
Compositions

**Jon Rarick,
"Embers"
Bill Dobbins**
Graduate College
Winner Studio
Orchestra

**George Darrah,
"New Autumn"
Dave Rivello**
Graduate College
Outstanding
Arrangements
Big Band

**Theresa Chen,
"Lonely Moments"
Bill Dobbins**
Graduate College
Outstanding
Arrangements
Small Ensembles

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UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

STUDENT MUSIC AWARD

LISTINGS



BYU Synthesis Big Band from Brigham Young University, Orem, UT

JAZZ SOLOIST

Junior High School Winners

Henry Acker

Guitar

Duxbury Middle School
Jill Norenberg
Duxbury, MA

Brandon Goldberg

Piano

Miami Arts Charter School
Paul Posnak
Miami, FL

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

Dylan Buckser-Schulz

Drums

Lagond Music School
Jerad Lippi
Elmsford, NY

Gabriel Severn

Bass

Loyalsock Township
Middle School
Eddie Severn
Williamsport, PA

Zane Smith

Piano

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

High School Winner

Zack Shubert

Piano

Carlmont High School
Peter Horvath
Belmont, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

Esteban Castro

Piano

Bergen County Academies
Phillip Kavin
Hackensack, NJ

Zaq Davis

Trumpet

Saint Ann's School
Jon Heim
Brooklyn, NY

Eugene Kim

Piano

Lexington High School

Pat Donaher

Lexington, MA

Performing Arts High School Winner

Gabe Rupe

Bass

Colorado Conservatory of the Arts
Eric Gunnison
Denver, CO

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance

Summer Camargo

Trumpet

Dillard Center for the Arts
Christopher Dorsey
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Community College Outstanding Performance

Jacob Abinante

Piano

El Camino College
Amy Bormet
Torrance, CA

Undergraduate College Winners

Luca Mendoza

Piano

University of Southern California
Thornton School of Music
Alan Pasqua
Los Angeles, CA

Caleb Smith

Trombone

Oberlin Conservatory
Robin Eubanks
Oberlin, OH

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Jamael Dean

Piano

University of the Pacific,
Brubeck Institute
Patrick Langham
Stockton, CA

Anthony Ferrara

Tenor Saxophone

NYU Steinhardt
David Pietro
New York, NY

Sean Mason*Piano*

University of North Carolina
at Greensboro
Ariel Pocock
Greensboro, NC

Eric Nakanishi*Alto Saxophone*

Berklee College of Music
Ralph Peterson
Boston, MA

Graduate College Winners**Patrick Hogan***Piano*

University of Nevada,
Las Vegas
David Loeb
Las Vegas, NV

Nathan Reising*Alto Saxophone*

New England Conservatory
Frank Carlberg
Boston, MA

**Graduate College
Outstanding Performance****Brandon Moore***Tenor Saxophone*

University of North Texas
Richard DeRosa
Denton, TX



Jazz Ensemble I from Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, Jacksonville, FL

SMALL JAZZ COMBO**Junior High School
Outstanding Performance****Jazz Combo**

Edna Brewer Middle School
Zack Pitt-Smith
Oakland, CA

High School Winners**So Fly Zone**

Ann Arbor Community
High School
Jack Wagner
Ann Arbor, MI

The Mingus Trio

Rio Americano High School

Josh Murray
Sacramento, CA

**High School
Outstanding Performance****The Frontiers Jazz Quartet**

Montclair High School
James Wasko
Montclair, NJ

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We're proud to salute *our* winners, the Jazzschool Studio Band (under the direction of Dave Eshelman) and our Jazzschool Advanced Jazz Workshop (under the direction of Michael Zilber).

Thanks to our esteemed Jazzschool faculty for leading our students to DownBeat wins in 14 of the last 15 years!



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Frontiers Jazz Quartet from Montclair High School, Montclair, NJ



VCS Radio Jazz Ensemble from Vacaville Christian School, Vacaville, CA

Performing Arts High School Winners

Colburn Jazz Workshop Thursday Night Band

Colburn Community School of
Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Colburn Jazz Workshop Monday Night Band

Colburn Community
School of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

Hamilton 'A' Combo

Hamilton High School
Academy of Music and
Performing Arts
Jim Foschia
Los Angeles, CA

Impulse

Denver School of the Arts
Dave Hammond
Denver, CO

Honors Ensemble Winner

Advanced High School Jazz Workshop I

The Jazzschool at California
Jazz Conservatory
Michael Zilber
Berkeley, CA

Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance

SFJAZZ All-Stars Combo

SFJAZZ
Dann Zinn
San Francisco, CA

Community College Winner

IATA Jazz Quartet

Cuesta College
Ron McCarley
San Luis Obispo, CA

Undergraduate College Winners

Kei Matsumaru Trio

Berklee College of Music
Tiger Okoshi
Boston, MA

Jake Victor 5tet

Conservatorium van Amsterdam

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University of the Pacific,
Brubeck Institute
Patrick Langham
Stockton, CA

José Valentino & Shawn Perkinson's Jazz Artist Ensemble

Lee University
Dr. José Valentino Ruiz-Resto
Cleveland, TN

Graduate College Winner

UNLV Honors Quartet

University of Nevada,
Las Vegas
David Loeb
Las Vegas, NV

LARGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Junior High School Winners

Little Big Band

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse



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Director Steve Torok



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**Small Vocal Jazz Group
Outstanding Performance**
Frequency
Director Matt Falker

JAZZ INSTRUMENTAL SOLOIST



Zack Shubert



Caleb Smith



Summer Camargo

Early Experiences Shape Jazz Players

The earliest and often most important influence on young artists is their parents. Whether simply through support and encouragement or through hours of hands-on assistance in the honing of playing techniques, a burgeoning musician is shaped first by their family life.

For Zack Shubert, this year's Jazz Instrumental Soloist winner at the high school level, that meant having parents who recognized his natural inclinations and helped build upon them. Growing up in the Bay Area, Shubert was drawn to the piano, and he demonstrated an innate ear for melody.

"I've always tinkered around on any piano I could find," Shubert said. "My parents realized that I kept picking little things up from what I was listening to, and I started taking lessons at 5 years old."

Now a junior at Carlmont High School in Belmont, California, Shubert maintains an active performance schedule while taking courses in a program called Middle College, through which he earns credit toward his high school graduation, as well as college. While those experiences undoubtedly would give him a leg up in a professional career in the Bay, visits to New York convinced the pianist that a move was in the cards.

"I plan to go to college in New York," he said. "The first time I went there I couldn't get enough of it. I went to the Village Vanguard and to one of the late-night jam sessions at Smalls."

Trumpeter Summer Camargo—who received an Outstanding Performance honor in the Performing Arts High School division—was raised in a household where big band and

swing music were the soundtrack. That planted the seed for her love of jazz, but she also might have inherited some of her talent from her grandfather, an evangelist who accompanied his preaching on guitar. His passing shortly before the competition deadline influenced Camargo's choice of material.

"I played [Benny Golson's] 'I Remember Clifford' in memory of my grandpa," she said. "I was thinking of him when I played and tried to put as much emotion as I could into it."

A junior at the Dillard Center for the Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Camargo intends to continue her studies at a music conservatory. Christopher Dorsey, Dillard's director of jazz studies and instrumental music, said, "Summer will be a force in the future of jazz, as well as in any style of music she decides to perform."

Trombonist Caleb Smith, who studies with Robin Eubanks at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio, is a winner in the Undergraduate College division of the Jazz Instrumental Soloist category (along with Luca Mendoza, a pianist at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music). Smith first heard music attending church with his parents in Cleveland, and he discovered jazz after picking up the trombone as a 5th grader. He later created a successful GoFundMe campaign to finance his trip to the Banff International Workshop in Jazz & Creative Music in Canada, where he studied with pianist Vijay Iyer and drummer Andrew Cyrille.

Inspired by such influential composer-performers as Ambrose Akinmusire, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, Smith hopes to follow in their footsteps after attending grad-



Nathan Reising

uate school. "I see myself playing my music," he said. "I've been getting into Indian classical music a lot recently, so maybe down the road I could try to insert the trombone voice into that scene. I want to be able to expand upon anything and everything."

Now in his final months in the master's program at New England Conservatory in Boston, alto saxophonist Nathan Reising is a winner in the Graduate College division (along with pianist Patrick Hogan, of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas). Reising began taking piano lessons at age 4. One of the treasures in his father's extensive record collection led him to the saxophone a few years later: John Coltrane's classic 1961 album *My Favorite Things*.

Reising's enthusiasm for instrumental jazz runs parallel to his love for singer-songwriters. He hopes to meld those two passions in some way in his future career. "I think lyrics help music resonate with a lot of people," he said. "It's important that the music I make be able to emotionally connect with listeners."

—Shaun Brady

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Jazz Soloist

High School Outstanding Performance

Zaq Davis, Trumpet

Precollege, Student of Jonathan Heim

Esteban Castro, Piano

Precollege, Student of Phillip Kawin and Jeremy Manasia

Latin Group

Graduate College Winner

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Honors Ensemble Outstanding Soloist

Alexandra Meli, Voice

Outstanding Soloist on "Haven't We Met"

The New York All State Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Precollege, Student of Karen Beardsley

Original Composition—Small Ensemble

Undergraduate College Outstanding Composition

Matt Wong, "Emptyful"

Student of Jim McNeely

Original Composition—Small Ensemble

High School Outstanding Composition

Esteban Castro, "Swan Song"

Precollege, Student of Phillip Kawin and Jeremy Manasia

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Jazz Ensemble I from University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

Sutter Middle School Jazz Band
Sutter Middle School
John Zimny
Folsom, CA

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

Folsom Middle School Jazz Band
Folsom Middle School
John Zimny
Folsom, CA

Jane Addams Middle School Jazz Band
Jane Addams Middle School
Deborah Schaaf
Seattle, WA

High School Winners

Jazz Band I
Folsom High School
Curtis Gaesser
Folsom, CA

Jazz Ensemble
Downey High School
Cornelius Olariu
Downey, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

Jazz Band I
Harvard-Westlake School
Shawn Costantino
Studio City, CA

Jazz Ensemble
Tarpon Springs High School
Christopher De Leon
Tarpon Springs, FL

VCS Radio Jazz Ensemble
Vacaville Christian School
Ralph Martin
Vacaville, CA

Performing Arts High School Winners

Colburn Jazz Workshop Big Band
Colburn Community School of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Jazz Band
Las Vegas Academy of the Arts
Patrick Bowen
Las Vegas, NV

Jazz Workshop Orchestra
Denver School of the Arts
Dave Hammond
Denver, CO



VJE1 from Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music, Bloomington, IN



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MICHAEL ORENSTEIN

for "Sharing the Mirror"

Original Composition for Small Ensemble, Undergraduate College
FACULTY MENTOR: Dan Wall

CALEB SMITH, TROMBONE

Jazz Soloist, Undergraduate College

FACULTY MENTOR: Robin Eubanks

OBERLIN
COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

Ambassador Jazz Orchestra

Orange County School of the Arts
Daniel St. Marseille
Santa Ana, CA

Jazz Ensemble I

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts
Don Zentz
Jacksonville, FL

Honors Ensemble Winners

Crescent Super Band

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

SFJAZZ High School All-Stars Big Band

SFJAZZ
Paul Contos
San Francisco, CA

Time Check Jazz Orchestra

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performances

Jazz at Lincoln Center Youth Orchestra

Jazz at Lincoln Center
Ted Nash
New York, NY

Studio Band

The Jazzschool at California Jazz Conservatory
Dave Eshelman
Berkeley, CA

Community College Winner

Jazz Ensemble

Mt. San Antonio College
Jeff Ellwood
Walnut, CA

Community College Outstanding Performances

Oceanside Jazz Orchestra

MiraCosta College
Steve Torok
Oceanside, CA

Jazz Ensemble

Riverside City College
Charlie Richard
Riverside, CA

Undergraduate College Winner

Jazz Ensemble

Lawrence University
Patricia Darling
Appleton, WI

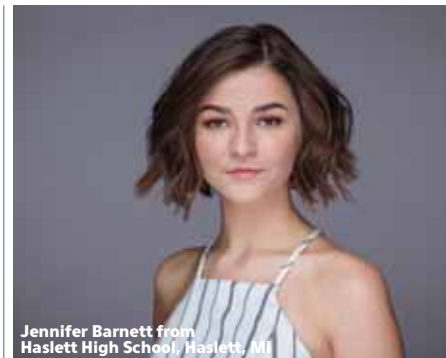
Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Jazz Ensemble I

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Robert Baca
Eau Claire, WI

BYU Synthesis Big Band

Brigham Young University
Ray Smith
Orem, UT



Jennifer Barnett from Haslett High School, Haslett, MI



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Chris White - Piano
Kelly Sill - Bass
Jack Mouse - Drum Set and Program Coordinator

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SMALL JAZZ COMBO



Colburn Jazz Workshop Thursday Night Band



Colburn Jazz Workshop Monday Night Band



UNLV Honors Quartet



Kei Matsumaru Trio

Crafting Original Works for Combos

Strong original compositions and arrangements were a through-line for this year's winners in the Small Jazz Combo category.

One of the submissions that alto saxophonist and Berklee College of Music undergraduate Kei Matsumaru submitted was of his trio playing his intriguingly titled work "In The Wise Words Of Drunk Koya." The composition was inspired by an episode in which Matsumaru decided to make a recording of a roommate who had been out on the town: "He was just saying some random things, and I transcribed about 10 seconds of what he said to actual pitches," Matsumaru explained. After six months of experimenting, the saxophonist was able to complete the piece for his trio.

But there were other inspirations. He drew on his time growing up in Papua New Guinea, where he heard traditional drumming; a jazz icon served as a muse as well.

"The compositional elements were inspired by Ornette [Coleman]," Matsumaru said. "I was listening to a lot of Ornette at the time—almost exclusively."

In the Undergraduate College division of this category, the co-winners are the Kei Matsumaru Trio and a student-led ensemble (at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam in The

Netherlands) called the Jake Victor 5tet.

Victor, a student at Lawrence University, is a classical percussion major who applied to the Conservatorium van Amsterdam as a jazz pianist—a move that he jokingly referred to as "the Chick Corea route."

"Jake's gone absolutely wild for jazz piano," marveled Patricia Darling, Lawrence University's jazz ensemble director. "He's absolutely dedicated. I hear him practicing all the time."

As luck would have it, Victor's roommate, a guitarist, also was accepted in the Conservatorium. During their first jam session, the pair met a bassist from Brussels and a Spanish drummer, and the four instantly bonded. A tenor saxophonist from Estonia joined the jam session festivities the next night, and the Jake Victor 5tet was born. "While over there, I challenged myself to write an idea or full tune every day for a month," Victor said.

"Jake does some really nice writing," Darling said.

The winner at the Graduate College level is the UNLV Honors Quartet (from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas). The group recorded all original compositions for its submission.

"I played musical Cupid by putting these four guys together, and the group congealed

right away," said David Loeb, director of jazz studies at UNLV. "They're intense and relaxed at the same time—natural and very organic. They have a real synergy."

"The quartet was definitely a mix of perspectives," said UNLV pianist Patrick Hogan. "It was an interesting mix of experiences, and it made for some good music."

In the Performing Arts High School division, the co-winners are both from the Colburn Community School of Performing Arts in Los Angeles: the Colburn Jazz Workshop Monday Night Band and the Colburn Jazz Workshop Thursday Night Band.

"We focus on composers the students are interested in," said Lee Secard, chair of the Colburn Jazz Workshop. "But both of these groups are full of composers, so one of the most important things is to do the music that the students write."

For both Colburn's Monday Night and Thursday Night bands, students write arrangements, too. "We like to do Joe Henderson tunes a lot, [plus] Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins," Secard said. He added that young stars on the jazz scene today, such as trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III, also are influences on his students.

—Yoshi Kato

2018 Winners of Eleven **DownBeat Student Music Awards**

Large Jazz Ensemble

Graduate College Co-Winner
UNC Jazz Lab Band 1
Dana Landry, Director

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Graduate College Co-Winner
Vocal Lab
Kerry Marsh, Director

Large Jazz Ensemble

Graduate College Co-Winner
All Angles Orchestra
Mike Conrad, Director

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Graduate College Co-Winner
Northern Colorado Voices
Kerry Marsh, Director

Original Composition

Graduate College Winner, Large Ensemble
Mike Conrad, "Out of the Swamp Into the Sky"
David Caffey, Professor

Jazz Arrangement

Graduate College Winner, Small Ensemble
Matteo Sabatini, "Footprints"
David Caffey, Professor

Jazz Arrangement

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangement
Studio Orchestra
Mike Conrad, "What Is This Thing Called Love"
David Caffey, Professor

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Undergraduate College Winner
Allison Wheeler
Julia Dollison, Professor

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Graduate College Outstanding Performance
Jenna McLean
Julia Dollison, Professor

Outstanding Vocal Soloist

Graduate College, Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble
Lauren Johnston on "Lace Skull", Vocal Lab
Kerry Marsh, Director

Outstanding Vocal Soloist

Undergraduate College, Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble
Nick Nelsen on "In The Wineight", Vocalese
Jenna McLean, Director

University of Northern Colorado

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- DownBeat Jazz Education Hall of Fame, 2010
- John LaPorta National Jazz Educator of the Year, 2012
- DownBeat Student Music Awards Judge, 2016

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Graduate College Winners

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David Caffey
Greeley, CO

UNC Jazz Lab Band I

University of Northern Colorado
Dana Landry
Greeley, CO

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

Eastman New Jazz Ensemble

Eastman School of Music
Dave Rivello
Rochester, NY

Frost Studio Jazz Band

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Stephen Guerra
Coral Gables, FL

Jazz Orchestra

Manhattan School of Music
Jim McNeely
New York, NY

VOCAL JAZZ SOLOIST

Junior High School Winner

Ava Preston

Hudson Middle School
Theron Brown
Hudson, OH

Junior High School Outstanding Performance

Tessa Korver

Eckstein Middle School
Moc Escobedo
Seattle, WA

High School Winners

Emma Hedrick

Carmel High School
Erin Benedict
Carmel, IN

Brooke Lambert

Roosevelt High School
Jean-Marie Kent
Seattle, WA

High School Outstanding Performances

Jennifer Barnett

Haslett High School

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Performing Arts High School Winner

Francesca Winer

Miami Arts Charter School
Christine de la Rosa
Miami, FL

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance

Vania Junco

Miami Arts Studio
Ryan and Cindy Ellis
Miami, FL

Undergraduate College Winner

Allison Wheeler

University of Northern Colorado
Julia Dollison
Greeley, CO

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Morgan Pirtle

University of Illinois at Chicago
Chris Madsen
Chicago, IL

Tama Shutts

California State University,
Long Beach
Bob Cole Conservatory of Music
Christine Helferich Guter
Long Beach, CA

Graduate College Winner

Monica Pabelonio

New England Conservatory
Dominique Eade
Boston, MA

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Jenna McLean

University of Northern Colorado
Julia Dollison
Greeley, CO

SMALL VOCAL JAZZ GROUP

High School Winner

Cary-Grove Jazz Choir


Cary-Grove High School



Folsom Jazz Band I from Folsom High School, Folsom, CA

Jazz Ensemble from Downey High School, Downey, CA




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The University of North Florida Jazz Studies curriculum prepares students for a life in music with a bachelor's and master's of Music Performance in Jazz Studies. Graduates hold positions in all aspects of the music industry such as performing in the nation's top professional ensembles, composing and arranging for the industry's leading artists, touring internationally and serving as leading pedagogues in music education. Additionally, the program offers students an opportunity to study with world-class faculty: J.B. Scott, trumpet; Lynne Arriale, piano; Todd DelGiudice, saxophone; Marc Dickman, low brass; Danny Gottlieb, drumset; Barry Greene, guitar; Clarence Hines, trombone; Dennis Marks, bass; and Dave Steinmeyer, trombone. Our award-winning Jazz Ensemble I is directed by J.B. Scott.

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LARGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE



Time Check Jazz Orchestra



UNC Jazz Lab Band I



Crescent Super Band



All Angles Orchestra

Covering Every Style

In this year's Large Jazz Ensemble category, two institutions won a pair of awards within the same division, illustrating that an environment of top-notch instruction can yield extraordinary results.

Two of the three Honors Ensemble winners are from Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse. "The Crescent Super Band is our flagship group," Chapman explained. "They play a whole melting pot of styles: There's 15 instrumentalists, like a traditional big band, and they cover every style from the big band era to Bruno Mars, Beyoncé and The Black Keys.

"All of our other bands are themed," Chapman continued, referring to the 19 other Soundhouse middle and upper school jazz and pop groups. "We're located about a half hour south of Salt Lake City and have students coming from all over the state." Some student musicians have a three-and-a-half-hour drive each way.

"The Time Check Jazz Orchestra focuses on contemporary instrumental big-band music,"

Chapman said of his school's other Honors Ensemble winner. "There are no vocalists, and the focus is on compositions from the past 10 years."

Two groups from the University of North Colorado in Greeley were the winners in the Graduate College division: the UNC Jazz Lab Band I and the All Angles Orchestra. The latter is a woodwinds/brass/string quartet/rhythm section group founded by composer, trombonist and UNC doctoral candidate Mike Conrad.

"What I love about jazz composition is that you can really showcase the personalities of the players, à la Duke Ellington," Conrad said. "And that's great in a school setting, where some of us have known each other and been playing together for three years."

In the Undergraduate College division, the winner was Lawrence University's Jazz Ensemble.

Like the Time Check Orchestra, Lawrence's Jazz Ensemble emphasizes newer compositions. "They basically cover a lot of new music—student compositions and contemporary

jazz works," said Patricia Darling, Lawrence University's jazz ensemble director.

"We're a relatively young group," said Lawrence sophomore Nathan Glaser, a trumpeter. "A lot of seniors graduated, so it gave our band a new start. It's mostly dominated by sophomores, which I find crazy. We have a great drummer who's a junior and a great piano player who's a junior. The new bassist is a sophomore, and she does well."

In the High School division, the winners were both from California: Jazz Band I at Folsom High School and the Jazz Ensemble at Downey High School.

"Because we have three full jazz bands as classes, it's mainly upperclassmen with a couple of freshmen," Folsom High School Music Director Curtis Gaesser said, describing the members of Jazz Band I. "They are all totally into jazz. I spend a lot of time making sure that I expose them to as much as possible, and they do the rest in terms of exploring what's out there. My job is to stay one year ahead of them."

—Yoshi Kato

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Cary, IL

Community College Winner

Vocal Jazz Ensemble

American River College
Dr. Art Lapierre
Sacramento, CA
Outstanding Soloist:
Cody Quakenbush on
"Joshua"

Community College Outstanding Performance

Frequency

MiraCosta College
Matt Falker
Oceanside, CA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Kelly Schenk Quartet

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Kate Reid
Coral Gables, FL

Vox Now

Sacramento State University
Gaw Vang Williams
Sacramento, CA

Graduate College Winner

VJE1

Indiana University
Jacobs School of Music
Dr. Jeremy Fox
Bloomington, IN
Outstanding Scat Soloist:
Pascal Pahl on "Back Home Again In
Indiana"



Jorge Machain of
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Graduate College Outstanding Soloist

Julian Cunningham

Outstanding Soloist on
"Just In Time"
C-Sus Voices
Sacramento State University
Gaw Vang Williams
Sacramento, CA

LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Junior High School Winner

Panache 8

Corte Madera School
Juliet Green
Portola Valley, CA
Outstanding Soloist:
Gigi Pistilli on "Doodlin'"

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

Eckstein Sr. Jazz Band

Eckstein Middle School
Moc Escobedo
Seattle, WA

Grass Valley Vocal Jazz

Grass Valley Elementary
Natalie Wilson
Camas, WA

High School Winners

Jazz Choir I

Folsom High School
Curtis Gaesser
Folsom, CA
Outstanding Soloist:
Nino Cayabyab on
"What'd I Say"

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LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE



Northern Colorado Voices, UNC—Greeley



Singcopation, Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, CA

Building on Legacies of Excellence

Among this year's Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble winners are many students who have extended a legacy of excellence at their schools.

Kerry Marsh, artist faculty in residence for the University of Northern Colorado's Vocal Jazz program, has written the charts for many DownBeat Student Music Award honorees. His groups Vocal Lab and Northern Colorado Voices were winners in the Graduate College division this year. In the ensemble Vocal Lab, it was a junior who was recognized as an Outstanding Soloist.

"Lauren Johnston is very clearly one of the finest students—undergraduate or graduate—that I've ever had in terms of skills, ability, attitude and motivation," Marsh said. "Every day she essentially writes her own recommendation letter."

Johnston's award-winning solo is on a Marsh arrangement of the "future soul" group Hiatus Kaiyote's song "Lace Skull." "They're one of my favorite bands, and I've leaned on their music as a way of getting through some challenging times," Johnston said. "Every semester Kerry likes to throw in a song that's in a cutting-edge pop style. This time, it just happened to be one of my favorite songs."

For the past 35 years, Folsom High School Music Director Curtis Gaesser has led both the jazz band and choir. His Jazz Choir I was one of this year's High School division winners, and Nino Cayabyab was honored as an Out-

standing Soloist on a version of Ray Charles' "What'd I Say."

"I've had Nino's siblings, as well, and they're all amazing," Gaesser said. "He's probably the shyest student I've ever had. But he came in to audition as a freshman, opened his mouth and I almost fell out of my chair."

Hutchinson Community College's group Badinage was a winner in the Community College division. Neal Allsup, Hutchinson's director of choral activities, submitted his group for the first time this year. "I never thought in my wildest dreams that it could happen," he said of the group's win.

"In the whole state of Kansas, there might be four or five high schools that do vocal jazz regularly," Allsup explained. "So, my job is to go out to find musicianship."

The other winner in the Community College division is Singcopation, from Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, California.

"This year was our 20th anniversary, so we resurrected charts from the past and brought back alumni," said Bruce Rogers, Mt. San Antonio College director of choral activities. "For the last 20 years, my current students [have known] who was there before them."

Over the decades, the group has won numerous Student Music Award honors. Rogers noted that Singcopation alumni are "like royalty" who "come in all the time and sit in on rehearsals."

Similarly, educator Kent Ellingson's Jazz



Folsom High School Jazz Choir I, Folsom, CA



Badinage, Hutchinson Community College, Hutchinson, KS

Singers at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas has been a frequent winner in the Performing Arts High School division. "This year's group consists of a pretty equal mix of seniors and juniors, along with a couple of sophomores," Ellingson said. "It is important to include younger students in the overall mix. It's the best way to ensure continuous progress of the group over time. The group gets exposure to as many styles as possible—swing, ballad, Latin, and contemporary—that all fit within a jazz framework."

—Yoshi Kato



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Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance
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Faith Winkler, Vocalist

Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist
Junior High School Outstanding Performance
Nathan Chen, Guitar

Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist
High School Outstanding Performance
Hailey Hyde, Vocalist

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Honors Ensemble Winner

Missouri All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Rosana Eckert, Guest Conductor
University of North Texas
Denton, TX

Honors Ensemble Outstanding Soloist

Alexandra Meli

Outstanding Soloist on
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Community College Winners

Badinage

Hutchinson Community College
Neal Allsup
Hutchinson, KS

Singcopation

Mt. San Antonio College
Bruce Rogers
Walnut, CA

Undergraduate College Winner

Pacific Standard Time

California State University,
Long Beach
Bob Cole Conservatory
of Music
Christine Helferich Guter
Long Beach, CA
Outstanding Male Scat Soloist:
Tama Shutts on "Shining Star"

Undergraduate College Outstanding Soloists

Ashleigh Jocks

Outstanding Soloist on
"Corner Pocket (Until I Met You)"
The Adelaide Connection

University of Adelaide,
the Elder Conservatorium
Lauren Henderson
Adelaide, South Australia

Nick Nelson

Outstanding Soloist on
"In The Winelight"
Vocalese
University of Northern Colorado
Jenna McLean
Greeley, CO

Graduate College Winners

Vocal Lab

University of Northern Colorado
Kerry Marsh
Greeley, CO
Outstanding Soloist:
Lauren Johnston on
"Lace Skull"

Northern Colorado Voices

University of Northern Colorado
Kerry Marsh
Greeley, CO

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

UNT Jazz Singers

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Hisako Ozawa



Zach Paris

Eclectic Tastes, Exceptional Talent

Drummer Zach Paris still remembers the thrill of hearing his own music on the radio for the first time. But by the time a song by Righteous Vendetta, a metalcore band he toured and recorded with for two years in his native Wyoming, blasted out of his speakers, Paris was out of the band and pursuing an advanced degree at the University of Nebraska.

"We were starting to get really serious into touring," Paris recalled. "My wife and I got back from our honeymoon, and I was only home a week-and-a-half before I left on tour for 40 days. I realized right away that wasn't a good way to have a family, so I started pursuing higher education."

Paris currently is completing his doctorate at Arizona State University, where he's studied with drummer Lewis Nash, and leads the school's steel band and percussion jazz ensemble. He hopes to follow the lead of performer/educators like Nash, whose academic and artistic lives augment one another.

The musical aggression that once propelled Righteous Vendetta helped net Paris this year's Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist award at the Graduate College level. He submitted a metal song that showed off his powerhouse chops, as well as an open drum solo inspired by Buddy Rich. Such eclecticism, girded by a love of jazz, is key to several of this year's winners.

Vocalist Jennifer Barnett, a student at Haslett High School in Michigan, not only won the Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist award at the High School level, but also earned an Outstanding Performance honor in the Vocal Jazz Soloist category. For the former, she submitted songs by The Beatles and Michael Jackson, and for the latter, renditions of "Body And Soul," "Long As You're Living" and John Coltrane's "Cousin Mary."

At the outset of her voice lessons with singer/educator Sunny Wilkinson, Barnett said, "I knew what kind of music I liked and I knew what kind of music I definitely didn't like. The similarities in the music that I did like were that it all had these jazz voicings and progressions."

Barnett's songwriting blends pop sounds with jazz harmonies. She accompanies herself on guitar, ukulele and piano, and currently is auditioning for college music programs.

Ava Preston, 13, is already a performer in the Cleveland area. She's a self-described "old soul" whose tastes run from Alanis Morissette to Ella Fitzgerald, radio-friendly pop to Broadway show tunes. Preston is this year's Junior High winner in both the Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist category and the Vocal Jazz Soloist category.

Pianist Theron Brown—Preston's teacher at Hudson Middle School, as well as regular accompanist—said, "Ava has always been gifted, and her love for music is filled with passion. More importantly, she understands how she can connect with people through her music, which is a big deal at her age."

Guitarist Hisako Ozawa, who studies at Musicians Institute in L.A., moved to the States from her native Tokyo in 2011 and has since been shredding on stages around the city. Ozawa won the Undergraduate College division by showing off her chops in both Southern rock and heavy metal, turning in interpretations of songs that featured two of her favorite guitarists—Ed King on Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama," and Michael Schenker on UFO's "Love To Love."

"I came here because many contemporary musicians come out here to make a name for themselves," she said. "I wanted to be surrounded by other people who are pursuing music as their profession." —Shaun Brady

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Vocalist
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Nathan Chen

Guitar
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Evan Wharton
Salt Lake City, UT

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High School Winner

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Vocalist
Haslett High School
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Undergraduate College Winner

Hisako Ozawa

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Ed Partyka
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Gabriel Dowdy-Terracciano
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NYU Steinhardt
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BLUES/POP/ROCK GROUP

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Jukebox Antihero
Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
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High School Outstanding Performance

**Leyden High Schools Vocal
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Leyden High Schools
Stacy Cunningham
Franklin Park, IL

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Patrick Kerl
Dallas, TX

Honors Ensemble Winner

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Los Angeles County High
School for the Arts
Frankie Blue
Los Angeles, CA

Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performances

Lo-Fi Riot
Caleb Chapman's
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Evan Wharton
Salt Lake City, UT

The Inevitables
Caleb Chapman's
Soundhouse
Evan Wharton
Salt Lake City, UT

Vicious Beat
Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

Undergraduate College Winner

Frost Fusion Ensemble
University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Steve Rucker
Coral Gables, FL

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

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Amherst
Jeffrey W. Holmes
Amherst, MA

Yejin Yun Electric Band

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Mac Jazz Ensemble

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Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance

La Onda Caribeña

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

Undergraduate College Winner

Brazilian Jazz Combo

University of Massachusetts,
Amherst
Felipe Salles
Amherst, MA

Graduate College Winners

Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra

Manhattan School of Music



Ava Preston of Hudson
Middle School in Hudson, OH

Bobby Sanabria
New York, NY

Frost Salsa Orchestra

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Alberto De La Reguera
Coral Gables, FL

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

UTA Latin Combo

University of Texas at Arlington
Stefan Karlsson
Arlington, TX

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION – SMALL ENSEMBLE

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Gabriel Severn, “Canção Para Fina”

Loyalsock Township
Middle School
Eddie Severn
Williamsport, PA

Junior High School Outstanding Composition

Brandon Goldberg, “The Understream”

Miami Arts Charter School
Paul Posnak
Miami, FL

High School Winners

Jett Lim, “Plan B”
Albany High School



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Outstanding Compositions**

**Esteban Castro,
"Swan Song"**
Bergen County Academies
Phillip Kavin
Hackensack, NJ

**Erik Nelson,
"This Is Not A Song"**
Albany High School
Dann Zinn
Albany, CA

**Zack Shubert,
"The Way Of Life"**
Carlmont High School
Peter Horvath
Belmont, CA

**Performing Arts
High School Winner**

Will Brandt, "Abditory"
Colburn Community School of
Performing Arts

Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

**Performing Arts High School
Outstanding Composition**

Gabe Rupe, "Dune"
Colorado Conservatory
for the Jazz Arts
Eric Gunnison
Denver, CO

Undergraduate College Winner

**Jiwon Kwon,
"The First Step"**
Berklee College of Music
Scott Free
Boston, MA

**Undergraduate College
Outstanding Compositions**

**Michael Orenstein,
"Sharing The Mirror"**
Oberlin Conservatory
Dan Wall
Oberlin, OH

**Andrew Saliba,
"Silent Minority"**
Western Michigan University
Andrew Rathbun
Kalamazoo, MI



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Jim McNeely
New York, NY

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**Walter Gorra,
"Bandwidth"**

William Paterson University
Pete McGuinness
Wayne, NJ

**Graduate College
Outstanding Compositions**

**Jonathan Fagan,
"Legacy (For The Late
Fred Sturm)"**

Eastman School of Music
Harold Danko
Rochester, NY

**Michael Spicer,
"Patchwork"**

University of Nevada,
Las Vegas
David Loeb
Las Vegas, NV

**Kom Wongsawat,
"Smile Behind Your Lies"**

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Chuck Bergeron
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Agoura High School
Chad Bloom
Agoura Hills, CA

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Ethan Moffitt, “Window Wonders”

Colburn Community School of
Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Undergraduate College Winner

Kenta Shimakawa, “Glimpse”

The New School for
Jazz and Contemporary Music
Keller Coker
New York, NY

Undergraduate College Outstanding Composition

Sam Wolsk, “Goodbye For Now”

Northwestern University
Victor Goines
Evanston, IL

Graduate College Winner

Mike Conrad, “Out Of The Swamp, Into The Sky”

University of Northern Colorado
David Caffey
Greeley, CO

Graduate College Outstanding Compositions

Demian Coca Guzman, “Raíces”

Hochschule Luzern
Ed Partyka
Luzern, Switzerland

Claudia Döffinger, “Monochrome”

University of Music and
Performing
Arts, Graz
Ed Partyka
Graz, Austria

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Saarthak Singhal, "Stablemates"

Henry M. Gunn High School
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Palo Alto, CA

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Ari Chais, "Social Call"

Colburn Community School of
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Jacobs School of Music
Jeremy Fox
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Jon Rarick, "Embers"

Eastman School of Music
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Emiliano Sampaio, "How Insensitive"

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Colleen Clark, "Bye-ya"
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Quincy Davis
Denton, TX

**Jesse Crosson,
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JAZZ EDUCATION HALL OF FAME

DAVEY S. YARBOROUGH | Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Yarborough's Mentorship a Part of the D.C. Jazz Tradition

This year's DownBeat Jazz Education Hall of Fame inductee is Davey S. Yarborough, whose 32-year tenure as jazz studies director and saxophone instructor at Washington D.C.'s exemplary Duke Ellington School of the Arts involved a rather circuitous journey.

He originally was hired at the now-renovated arts specialty high school in tony Georgetown in May 1978 for a September position that was derailed by federal education budget cuts. In the interim, Yarborough served at such D.C. public schools as Wilson High School and H.D. Woodson High School. Perseverance paid off, and he rejoined the Ellington faculty in 1984—as the attendance counselor. In September 1986 he became band director.

Yarborough's original charge was saxophone instruction. When he started up the school's big band, "they put me in a small room, one-third the size of this current band room," he said, gesturing at the impressive expanse wrought by recent renovation. "It had a couple of music stands, but no equipment. Another teacher said, 'Well, the equipment was here, but it sorta walked out.' So, come my first class, I had my drummers play air drums. I said, 'You set up and act like this is your snare drum, your floor tom.' I got some music, and I had a little keyboard there, and the horn players had their horns. Lo and behold, one day a CNN camera[person] walked in the room to film a news story, asking, 'Where's the drumset?' The principal walked in, they turned the cameras around to him, and a little while later, I had a couple of drumsets."

Yarborough quickly got busy acquiring equipment for his program, shortly securing major donations from Wynton Marsalis and Joe Williams, whom he'd played with as part of a D.C. band backing the mellifluous baritone in concert. "From then, I learned how to write grants," he said. "I wrote letters to airlines, anybody I thought would donate. I got enough to do what I needed from that point on."

In the meantime, the D.C. native, Federal City College and University of the District of Columbia graduate significantly upped his Ellington quotient through the tutelage of one of the district's selfless jazz mentors, the great bassist Keter Betts.

"Keter asked me to come play with his



band, and I did for about five years. When I got the Ellington job, Keter called, wanting me to come by his house," Yarborough said. "We sat in the kitchen, and he asked me about the Duke Ellington School. I was already shocked that I got the job, because a whole lot of veteran band directors wanted that job, and he could see that there was a little bit of community tension behind that. So, Keter said, 'What do you know about Duke?' I told him the little I knew. And he said, 'Well, that's not enough, because your job now is to enlighten those kids.' So, he went down to his basement and pulled out a book called *Ellingtonia* and showed me all the songs—everything—to the point of overload. I said to myself, 'How am I going to deal with this?' That's when Keter volunteered to come to Ellington before school."

Three decades later, thoroughly immersed in all things Ellington, and continuing as one of the D.C. area's most potent saxophonists, Yarborough can boast of a program whose students have copped numerous trophies—a fact made clear as he pointed to a huge cabinet brimming with awards—and traveled to perform at prestigious jazz festivals.

"I have watched him change the lives of countless children by introducing them to the possibilities that a career in music can

provide," said Ellington School CEO Tia Powell-Harris, who has observed Yarborough's teaching mastery for more than two decades. "Davey not only cultivates the musical abilities of his passionate jazz students, but builds in them strong character and a deep concern for humanity. Davey is what our students so desperately need—a role model of quality."

Prominent Ellington grads since Yarborough's tenure began include pianist Marc Cary, saxophonist Brian Settles, *Showtime at the Apollo* music director Daniel Moore and a raft of others currently contributing to D.C.'s remarkable community of resident jazz musicians.

"Davey Yarborough is the most consistent teacher I have ever met," Cary said. "Although I chose not to take his class, he found a way to teach me. He pushed me to be the best I could be. I also realized a good teacher isn't always who you, the student, think they should be. He is proof that dedication to making others reach their full potential is a quality of a great person and teacher."

Owing much to Betts' mentorship, D.C. is definitely a bass town, which might account, in part, for the remarkable run of high-class bassists who've matriculated through Yarborough's program, including Eric Wheeler, Corcoran Holt, Ameen Saleem and Ben Williams.

"To say that Davey Yarborough is committed to music and jazz education would be an understatement," Williams exclaimed. "His dedication to teaching young people is a significant part of the musical legacy that has emerged from Washington, D.C."

On the cusp of his retirement, Yarborough's induction to the DownBeat Jazz Education Hall of Fame is quite timely. His future plans include ramping up his performance career, including with his vocalist-wife Esther Williams, and further developing their Washington Jazz Arts Institute program into a student mentoring unit.

That certainly would reflect how he arrived at this point, through mentoring from such D.C. elders as Dr. Art Dawkins, Bobby Felder, Calvin Jones, Frank Wess and Betts. No one comes better equipped for the work ahead than distinguished jazz educator Davey S. Yarborough.

—Willard Jenkins

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We would like to thank all of the amazing students that have come through our music programs over the years. We thank you for your pursuit of excellence, the tenacity to learn and improve, and all the joy you have brought to our lives over the years. Finally, a huge thank you to the Folsom Music Boosters, the Folsom/Cordova School District, and the city of Folsom for keeping Music a priority in our great city of Folsom for so many years. — Sincerely, Curtis Gaesser & John Zimny

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JAZZ EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

CHRISTINE HELFERICH GUTER

Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University, Long Beach

Assisting Students' Journeys

When they arrive at university to study music, young people often feel there's an expected level of proficiency they have to achieve. Not so in Christine Helferich Guter's class at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University—Long Beach, where she has directed the vocal jazz program since 2002.

"There's no bar," said Guter. "I want students to develop ownership of the music and grow to their own level of expectations. My job is to assist them to become independent thinkers and critical listeners."

"Overall, she brings support, love and positivity," said Sean Fitzpatrick, who studied with Guter as an undergraduate before returning to join the Bob Cole faculty. "She has created a culture of relentlessly high musical, professional and personal standards."

With close to 30 DownBeat Student Music Awards given to her students since 2006, it's obvious that Guter's techniques are effective.

What she aims to do, she said, is to instill in students the ability to be honest in their musical expression.

"It's not just about the technical," she said. "I want them to feel. We walk around with so much armor on that it's difficult to really reach in and perform from our hearts."

She recognizes that there's a balance that must be struck between jazz vocalists going for what's "honest" and the danger of being looked down upon by close-minded instrumentalists who suspect that singers might not have a deep knowledge of theory.

"That still goes on," Guter said, "and it's disappointing and discouraging. As a singer approaching any situation, you have to have done the work and have a professional demeanor. You have to be ready, and if you are, other musicians will recognize that."

Outside the classroom, Guter has been the model of professionalism, developing a lengthy resume, with appearances on the soundtracks of films ranging from *Happy Feet* in 2006 to *Dead Pool 2* earlier this year. She's also performed extensively as the lead singer in the quintet Vocalogy, as well as with her own ensemble, and recorded with artists as diverse as Herb Alpert and Neil Young.

Guter earned a bachelor's degree in music education from Western Michigan University in 1993 and then graduated from the Univer-



Christine Helferich Guter

sity of Miami's Frost School of Music with a master's in studio music and jazz. Her teaching career began at a high school in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and continued after she relocated to California.

"When I first moved to L.A., people said, 'You can't have both an academic and performing career,'" she recalled, "but I work at staying as active as I can be in the studios and onstage. I think that really brings added value to my students."

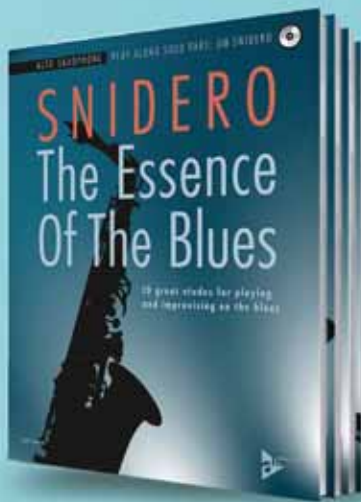
Fitzpatrick said Guter's consistently high standards and thorough approach to rehearsals made a distinct impression on him.

"Christine's teaching approach is focused on preparing her students to be consummate professionals and top-notch musicians," he said. "Rehearsal time is sacred and is used to focus on ensemble technique and music-making. One of the biggest things that sets her apart is that she does not allow the students to sing and repeat material incorrectly. If any moment of music is out of tune, not together, not dynamic, or not in the spirit of the piece, she will immediately stop them and correct it. This way, the ensemble does not reinforce mistakes, but only correct singing and musicality."

Guter credits her early teachers, such as Sunny Wilkinson and Steve Zegree (1953–2015), for inspiring her devotion to craft.

"They were role models to me, and I try to do the same," she said. "I'm so grateful to get to play a little role in the lives of my students and take just a few steps with them along their journey."

—James Hale



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**DOWNBEAT 41ST ANNUAL
STUDENT
MUSIC AWARDS**

JAZZ EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

CUAUHTÉMOC "MOC" ESCOBEDO

Eckstein Middle School, Seattle, Washington

A Legendary Work Ethic

"How many in a saxophone section?" asked Cuauhtémoc "Moc" Escobedo, this year's recipient of the Jazz Education Achievement Award. "Five? We had 12. And we got the award."

The 55-year-old band director was sitting in the empty auditorium at Seattle's Eckstein Middle School, where he has taught since 1994. The award he referred to is a recent win for outstanding sax section at the Next Generation Jazz Festival in Monterey, California.

Eckstein jazz bands are notoriously overstuffed. Escobedo believes everyone should get a chance to play—especially girls.

"Most bands are male dominated," he said. "The way to [increase the number of] young ladies is to put in as many as are capable and let them grow into it."

Escobedo's inclusive approach is working, as evidenced by 15 honors in the DownBeat Student Music Awards over the years. In 2017, his students won five honors, and Eckstein students received two Outstanding Performance honors in this year's SMAs. The walls of the Eckstein band room are lined with trophies from the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival, the Reno Jazz Festival and others.

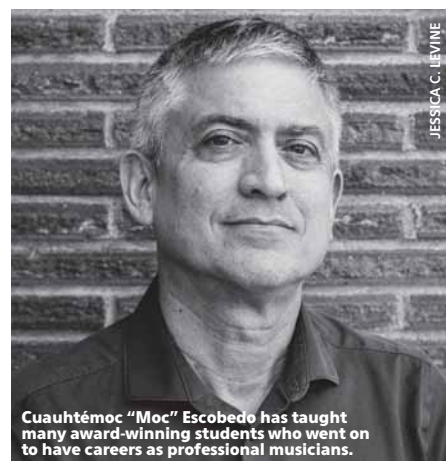
Beyond the festival circuit, Escobedo received Washington State's prestigious Golden Apple in 2006, for outstanding teaching. Earshot Jazz, which produces Seattle's annual jazz festival, gave him its Golden Ear award.

Born in Mexico and raised there, and in Texas, Escobedo played trombone in orchestra and concert band in school, earning a bachelor's in music education and a master's in trombone performance from Texas Tech University. But he had scant jazz background.

"I was shocked when they put me in the first jazz band [at Texas Tech]," he recalled. "All they would tell me was, 'Lay back!' What did that mean? When I took this job, I had to really come up with a way of describing what 'laying back' was. What is the triplet feel? Because it's not magic."

Maybe not. But learning how to teach it was a challenge, especially in Seattle, where jazz education operates at a very high level.

"I still remember that first jazz concert we had," he remembered. "I heard [an ensemble from] Washington Middle School, and I said, 'OK, this is a different game!' You don't come in here playing 'Girl From Ipanema.' This is



Cuauhtémoc "Moc" Escobedo has taught many award-winning students who went on to have careers as professional musicians.

about the blues and Basie."

That summer, Escobedo took lessons on jazz bass and drums, and went to every jazz clinic he could find. Additionally, he devoured charts shared by colleagues Hal Sherman, of Kent-Meridian High School, and Bob Knatt, the now-retired director at Washington Middle School.

With his duties at Eckstein including three jazz bands, three concert bands and two vocal jazz groups, it's a wonder that Escobedo has much spare time. His work ethic is legendary.

"He's here all summer," explained colleague Brad Smith, Eckstein's orchestra director. "He's in the building on weekends, after school. He teaches during his lunch hour. He's constantly working. If he worked any harder, he would have to have a cot."

The results of all that work are apparent on the national jazz scene. Eckstein alumni include trumpeter and vocalist Jumaane Smith, who tours with Michael Bublé and recorded with Rashied Ali (1933–2009); and trombonist Andy Clausen, of the innovative, New York-based quartet The Westerlies. Acclaimed vocalist Sara Gazarek was a "Moc" student as well, back in elementary school.

But the real payoff isn't famous protégés, Escobedo said. It's performance.

"Watching the kids when they're jelling and grooving, watching the audience, that's what I love," he explained. "I'm looking forward to our swing dance, here in this auditorium. Everybody will be dancing. That's what it's all about."

—Paul de Barros

JUDGING CRITERIA

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- 1) Overall sound
- 2) Presence or authority
- 3) Proper interpretation of idiom
- 4) Improvisation or creativity
- 5) Technique
- 6) Intonation
- 7) Phrasing
- 8) Dynamics
- 9) Accurate rhythm/time
- 10) Material

ENGINEERING CRITERIA

- 1) Perspective: balance of channels; amount and type of reverb; blend (Do all sounds seem to have been performed at the same time and place? Do solos seem natural or do they stick out?).
- 2) Levels: saturation or other overload, under modulation resulting in excessive hiss, consistency of levels, left/right balance, etc.
- 3) Transparency and apparent transient response.
- 4) Special effects: Are they appropriate? Do they add or detract?
- 5) Extraneous noises, clicks, hum, etc. (for a non-live performance, any non-musical sound).
- 6) Professional etiquette.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Plaques are awarded to the music department of each winning middle school, high school and college. Certificates are awarded to each winner (or Outstanding Performance honoree) and to the director of ensembles.

JUDGES

Jim Anderson: Multiple Grammy winner and professor at NYU's Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music.

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Don Braden: Saxophonist, flutist, composer, arranger; Music Director, Litchfield Jazz Camp.

Jeff Coffin: Saxophonist, bandleader, composer, educator/clinician.

John Daversa: Chair, Department of Studio Music and Jazz, Frost School of Music, University of Miami.

Orbert Davis: Emmy Award-winning trumpeter, composer, educator; co-founder, conductor of Chicago Jazz Philharmonic.

Les Hooper: Composer, arranger for film, TV, commercials, orchestra and recordings; clinician.

Fred Irby III: Howard University coordinator of Instrumental Music, trumpet instructor and Director of the Howard University Jazz Ensemble.

Bart Marantz: Legendary jazz educator whose bands have won 245 DownBeat Student Music Awards.

Typhanie Monique: Recording artist, vocalist, educator/clinician, composer.

Miles Osland: Saxophonist; Director of Jazz Studies, University of Kentucky.

Bob Parsons: Saxophonist, arranger and composer.

Dave Rivello: Eastman School of Music Assistant Professor of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media, and Director, New Jazz Ensemble.

Albert Rivera: Saxophonist, composer, educator; Director of Operations, Litchfield Jazz Camp.

John Santos: Percussionist, clinician, label owner; U.S. Artists Fontanals Fellow; writer/historian.


Gregory Tardy: Recording artist, Assistant Professor of Jazz Saxophone, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Roger Treece: Arranger/composer, UNC Jazz Press author and educator.

Ryan Truesdell: Bandleader, composer, arranger, trombonist, clinician.

James Warrick: Educator/clinician, former Director of Jazz Studies at New Trier High School.

David Weiss: Trumpeter, composer, arranger, leader of the New Jazz Composers Octet, Endangered Species and The Cookers.



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