

JAZZ

FESTIVALS



"Concert sold out!" "Schools wanting to compete turned away!" How do you get headlines like these at a small community college lying in the shadow of Disney World with a large college and a university within some forty miles? The answer lies in the hard work and organization that go into a jazz festival.

Music programs in community colleges traditionally have put emphasis on the symphonic band, and this is important for music transfer students. But there is value, too, in providing experiences that have appeal to the music major and non-major in another aspect—jazz studies is such a field.

Good jazz musicians must be as talented as any other. They must be rooted in the evolutionary stages of the music to be able to conduct an authentic jazz performance. The harmony, form, and style of the music is determined by the musical context. A jazz experience, especially on the educational level, is much more than someone taking an improvised solo within a musical ensemble. This is where the jazz festival becomes an important learning tool for the student.

There are many aspects to organizing a successful festival. Lack of money is a serious consideration, but there are funds available from many different sources. The National Endowment for the Arts has funded Lake-Sumter jazz festivals in the past. To receive funding, one must submit a grant application through the state capital, headquarters for the State Council of the Arts. There are also many private trusts established through banks that want to support these kinds of functions, and

they do contribute. Also, the banks enjoy becoming involved because it shows their community support. Another key source of funds is the registration and ticket fees. Each school participating should be required to pay a unit fee which would entitle its band members to enter all festival functions, except the final concert. The price set for the final concert ticket should be directly related to the cost of the headliner in attendance. However, because jazz festivals are a public educational service, the director should try to keep prices for both tickets and registration at a reasonable level.

The most important aspect of any educational jazz festival is the clinicians and headliner. The main attraction should be an individual or ensemble of sufficient fame and popularity to entice schools to attend. The festival clinicians, however, generally provide the more lasting *learning experience* for the students, so they should be chosen for their educational expertise and their ability to communicate and relate to the novice jazz musician. Also, they will be adjudicating the bands in attendance, conducting a clinic on a specific area of jazz, and playing a concert with the school jazz ensemble.

Four types of media are used to promote the jazz festival. They are a midday television show to inform the public about the festival and general music program, radio commercials, feature story placement in newspapers, and advertisements. Although the average return on a mailout is only two percent, this process of informing schools of the coming event can be successful.

The amount of time and effort the festival director devotes to a project of this nature can be large. The director will have to make many important decisions before, during, and after the event. Is it all worth it? Absolutely. The number of students and directors reached through a project like this can help to build a new jazz department and raise the level of jazz education throughout the country. It's a long, hard job to produce this event, but the educational repercussions continue long after the clinics and concerts are over and the participants return home. ■

Bart Marantz (above) is director of instrumental music and director of an annual jazz festival at Lake-Sumter Community College in Leesburg, Florida.

NEW LIFE FOR A MUSIC PROGRAM

By Bart Marantz