



Bart Marantz

[Anne Bothwell](#) | January 8, 2014 3:15 PM

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The Jazz Education Network is holding its national conference at the Hyatt Reunion this week. Organizers expect 3,000 teachers, musicians and students. Bart Marantz will be one of them. He's Director of Jazz Studies at Booker T. Washington High School for the Visual and Performing Arts. The school's graduates include Roy Hargrove, Erykah Badu and Norah Jones. But when he stopped by KERA's studio, Marantz told me that things are different for today's students.

◦ **Listen to the interview that aired on KERA FM:**

- **You can attend performances and clinics at the Jazz Education Network at the Hyatt Reunion tonight through Saturday. Details at the end of this post.**

Here are some highlights from our conversation:

The music business has always been tough. But talented kids who want to pursue a music career face a new kind of challenge.

"Today we are so saturated with incredible musicians who have come through, not the street, but the classroom. And then they've blossomed into great musicians. So this is what we're producing now. There is a huge amount of great musicians available to the industry. So it's a bit scary. It's a lot different than when Roy, or Nora, or Erykah were coming up. They had a much better chance of hitting it big. But this is one of the things that I really love about what I do. We feed the industry. We have eight kids [graduates] with 31 Grammys. But you probably haven't heard of the majority of those kids.

"If you look during my era, it was all based on big bands. That's what I played on. And that's gone. We teach kids now, in the classroom, the American Songbook. And that's how they're going to earn a living. Playing in trios, quartets and quintets.

Marantz has been teaching for more than 30 years. How's teaching jazz different today?

"Well, the kids have changed. The students have gotten to a point now where instant gratification is a norm. You can press a button on a computer and get whatever you want. In the music industry, it's the exact opposite. It's five to seven hours a day of practice and we have few kids now that are willing to sacrifice their time and make that kind of commitment to an art form. It's rare that you get students that will....even though they may have a very mature approach to playing at an early age you still have to back up and look at each note, in time, with center, to pitch. and listen to the right music and do all the things very slowly.... to become a consistent and fine musician. They expect it to happen very, very quickly. And the music does not happen quickly.

Almost every college and high school has some kind of jazz offering, due to demand. What's the biggest challenge in high school jazz education?

"The real challenge is that to be a jazz instructor, you have to understand jazz music. And very few people do. I think jazz is a four-letter word that people apply to a lot of different styles and kinds of music. To be a bebopper is a very unique and challenging and amazing thing. To change keys 12 times in one song when there are only 12 keys is probably the most sophisticated thing you can do on the planet to me. Artistically anyway.

"Today to teach this on the high school level in particular, it's very difficult. A lot of guys and gals don't know the inner workings of the music. Although I'm very glad to have them in the classroom introducing kids to it. It's a two-edged sword."

JAZZ EDUCATION NETWORK CONFERENCE INFORMATION

NOTE: At this point you may want to go to the convention at the Hyatt Reunion and register in person.

Registration: Wednesday 4-8 pm | Thursday 9 am-5 pm and 7-8 pm | Friday 10 am-5 pm and 7-8 pm | Saturday 10 am-2 pm and 7-8 pm