

What Have We Done And How Do We Fix It?

By Bart Marantz, Director of Jazz Studies, Booker T. Washington High School, Edited By Scott Davison

Sometimes, you can be so successful that you put yourself out of business. Unfortunately, that scenario currently seems to be the case for the burgeoning jazz programs and arts schools that have produced bumper crops of young, top-notch jazz musicians with nowhere to go except an occasional weekly gig.

As T.S. Eliot wrote in "The Waste Land," "April is the cruelest month." He must have been thinking of music students, who each year must fulfill the often grinding and stressful demands of required recitals for obtaining degrees in musical performance. In April of 2013, my own children were preparing intensely for recitals in order to obtain, in one case, an undergraduate degree from a well-known conservatory, and another for a Master's degree, both in the area of jazz performance.

The Way it Was...

Back in 1977, I had also just completed a Masters degree in jazz performance, but at a radically different time for the music industry. Big bands toured three hundred days a year, and groups such as Blood, Sweat, and Tears and Chicago Transit Authority – later known simply as Chicago – jettisoned the ensuing fusion of jazz and rock that burst onto the music scene with an unprecedented dynamic explosion. Now-legendary groups such as the Brecker Brothers Band (featuring Randy and Michael Brecker, both featured on Al Kooper's

first BS&T's lineup), along with super-groups such as Weather Report, Chick Corea's Return to Forever, and Miles Davis' fusion groups of the seventies, drove this period to heights of greatness for jazz enthusiasts and musicians alike.

Bands of this time were also being built around new concepts derived from schools that housed jazz programs on campuses around the country. One of the first and best was conceived at Indiana University under the direction of Jerry Coker, who later handed the program to now-NEA Jazz Master, David Baker when Jerry moved on to the University of Miami in the late '60s as director of Jazz Studies. Jazz pianist, educator, and author Dr. Bill Lee, dean of the UM School of Music at the time, encouraged Latin and Cuban influences, which are still evident to this day.

Initially, only a few schools boasted full-fledged jazz programs in the mid-'60s. Berklee School of Music in Boston, which even in its early days was in full swing, helped lead the way with a degree in jazz performance and jazz education. North Texas State, now the University of North Texas, with its internationally-recognized jazz program and long a leader for big band education and playing, remains on a level of consistent excellence as well. Now, hundreds of programs around the country on the community college, university, and conservatory levels house some of the greatest names in jazz and inspire young artists to new levels of excellence and invention.

The Way it Is...

So, with such a dynamic, talented, and well-schooled crop of young musicians issuing from these programs each year, why is it so hard to get a paying gig?

What have we done? Our first generation of jazz pioneers such as David Baker, Jamey Aebersold, Jerry Coker, and Dan Haerle showed us how to apply the inner workings of jazz music as it pertains to theory, styles, and ensemble playing, which would allow students to start earning a living as jazz musicians while still in school. When we, the pros now in the classroom, started our careers after successfully performing, we developed our skills through a combination of "book learning" and performance experience. At the time, however, few of us could imagine the future success of our teaching and musicianship programs, which produced the next generation of performing jazz musicians in record numbers, often coming right out of high school!

During these years of growth and expansion on our campuses, even on the high school level, where performing arts schools are turning out the highest quality musicians, many have become leaders in jazz and commercial music right out the door. As recently as last school year, the day after

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graduating from Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, our eighteen-year-old Combo I drummer flew to Brazil to begin touring with Stanley Clarke. Now at nineteen his performing schedule is split between Stanley and Al Jarreau. We have suddenly found ourselves at a place where the number of young musicians, playing at a level inconceivable to those who laid the foundation for jazz education 50 years ago, exceeds our ability to provide them with the opportunities and venues to showcase their talents and excellence.

While in Boston and New York City in April of 2013, I witnessed the highest level of dynamic performance I've experienced by young artists in my career as an artist/instructor. We always had the cream of the crop at the Brubeck Institute, where I taught and coached at the Brubeck Summer Jazz Colony for eleven years, as well as at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, where we have garnered more *DownBeat* Awards, 239 (to date), than any other school in North America, and boast of at least nine graduates combining for thirty-three Grammys! Hundreds of fine, well-schooled jazz musicians support the industry, and yet fewer and fewer opportunities exist for them to showcase their amazing talents and bring the gift of the musical exhilaration that jazz uniquely produces through these wonderful artists to its fans. Much of the current situation exists simply because of the glut of success and the burgeoning number of worldwide jazz education programs inspired by and molded upon our own successful initiatives.

Some of the wonderful players I heard in Boston and New York had driven two hours each way to play a \$50-\$75 gig, a "club owner's dream": three sets, three bands, and every band responsible for its own advertising – all for a one-hour performance. A club owner's life can be tough, and thank goodness for the jazz spots that exist, but what about the musicians? Who can survive, especially in the Big Apple or Boston, on seventy-five bucks a night when filling six nights is almost impossible each month of the year.

What's the Solution?

Obviously, opportunities for musicians must be augmented. But how? Jazz clubs alone can't save the day. One possibility exists in the very locations where young musicians are being trained. College campuses with music programs must take a greater role in providing support for the musicians they are creating, often to the tune of fifty or sixty thousand dollars a year. Today, the coffee shop has become the place to go, and millions of dollars spent for a five-dollar cup of java, accompanied by free Wi-Fi, could also provide a viable venue for live jazz. Campus coffee/sandwich shops, working in conjunction with music programs, could not only foster an appreciation of jazz, but also an educa-

tional opportunity for musicians to learn the machinations of holding a daily job and the sense of responsibility so difficult to learn merely from a series of sporadic and unreliable gigs. Local professional musicians could augment the lineups, setting the groundwork for fruitful collaborative efforts between seasoned performers and those of the future.

Over the past fifty years, jazz has moved off the streets, out of the dance clubs, and into the classrooms of both universities and magnet schools. Jazz instruction has become a field unto itself with pricey degrees... but then what?

Schools are producing the highest level of excellence in the arts in the history of music education. It seems somewhat irresponsible – even cruel – to create so many solid,

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even stellar, jazz musicians with nowhere to go. Nowadays, it's not enough for jazz programs just to produce exciting, highly trained, and well-prepared musicians. Jazz institutions and educators must also work to provide new venues and performance possibilities for the upcoming generations of musicians we inspire and train. If we love jazz and are committed to its continued existence and evolution, we must not let success strangle its future by disillusioning potential stars, who turn away from jazz because "there aren't any jobs" and feeling as though there's no future. It's up to us who are dedicated to jazz music, both as players and educators, to ensure there is "life after music school." Hopefully, that's the legacy we can leave, so we can keep the music alive.



Bart Marantz has been teaching jazz studies at the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts for 32 years. The music program has won 239 DownBeat Student Music Awards since 1983. The Jazz and Commercial program at Booker T. Washington HSPVA has produced nine alumni with 33 Grammys over its 38-year history. Marantz is a 1986 Fulbright Scholar.

He founded the "Arts Jazz Festival" raising a quarter of a million dollars in scholarships, which ran from 1990 through 1993 in the Arts District of Dallas, Texas. Marantz received the "Achievement In Jazz Education" award in 1993 from DownBeat Magazine and was again honored by DownBeat as the 18th recipient of the Jazz Education Hall of Fame in 2010. Most recently, Bart Marantz was awarded The John LaPorta National Jazz Educator of the Year for 2012 by The Berklee College of Music, Boston and The Jazz Educators Network, JEN. He is only the ninth jazz educator in the U.S. to receive this prestigious recognition.