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## Keeping the beat

Jazz musicians share tips, tunes with students

By DAN RICE  
Staff Writer

Jazz musician Thelonious Monk Jr., dressed in a brown leather jacket, dark shades and felt hat, paced around the West Valley High School jazz band Tuesday while the students worked through a number.

Monk shared an observation with the group at the end of its song.

"I noticed only a couple of you were tapping your foot," he said. "Tapping your foot is like a jazz thing. It comes with the territory."

Watch any great jazz artist, Monk told the students, and the one trait they all share is a foot-tapping habit. It's the surest way to stay on time with fellow musicians in the improvisational style of jazz.

Foot-tapping was one of many tips Monk and fellow musicians from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz provided to West Valley students during a two-hour visit to the school.

The Fairbanks stop was part of statewide tour this week for members of the institute, a nonprofit education group that travels to schools around the world to promote the cultural and creative benefits of jazz.

Musicians started at Juneau-Douglas High School Monday, left for Barrow following their West Valley High presentation and planned to end the week at Bartlett High School in Anchorage.

"This is our first time in Alaska and we're digging it," said Bobby Watson, an alto saxophonist who led a performance by a five-piece jazz combo during a morning assembly at West Valley.

In introductory remarks, Monk told students that jazz is an important part of America's cultural identity.

"I've had the fortune of working with everybody who's anybody in jazz," said Monk, son of the late jazz composer and pianist Thelonious Monk Sr., the institute's namesake who played with the likes of Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. "Jazz is probably the music that represents our country the most."

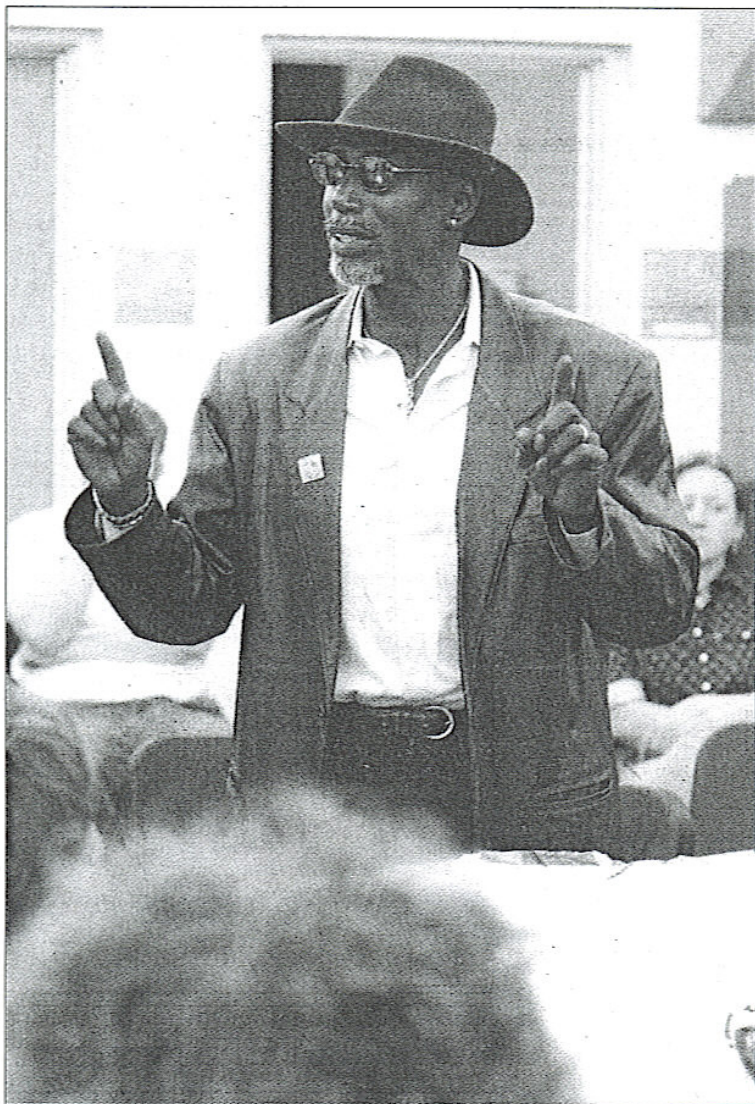
Even students who prefer pop music or other genres should appreciate what jazz has contributed to music, he added.

"For instance, when you hear that rap performance and it sounds like the singer is in one key and the band is in another and you say, 'Yeah, that's the stuff,'" Monk said. "Well, the reason your ear is acclimated like that is because it's filtered on down through jazz."

The musical style is also the one art form that originated purely in the United States, said J.B. Dias, project director for the institute's Jazz in America education program.

"Jazz is basically a marriage between European music and African music," said Dias, whose neat hair and business attire contrasted with the more suave style of the musicians.

From Europe, jazz inherited the musical



Eric Engman/News-Miner

**JAZZ AMBASSADORS**—Above, Thelonious Monk Jr. talks to students in the jazz band during the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz's Alaska Public School Tour stop Tuesday at West Valley High School. The tour, sponsored by The Allen Foundation for Music, is part of the institute's Jazz In America, an Internet-based curriculum for fifth-, eighth-, and 11th-grade social studies, American history and music students across the United States. At left, Leonard Brown, left, director of special projects, works with West Valley High School jazz band guitarist Donovan Camp.



instruments and the harmony, he said. From Africa, came the expression, the extension of the artist's voice through the music.

"Music can convey much deeper emotions and meaning than words can," Dias said.

Once the lesson was complete, Watson and crew treated the West Valley students to a

show.

Students took a while to warm to the musicians' early morning performance.

"I don't know if they told you in Reader's Digest, but when you're listening to jazz,

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Eric Engman/News-Miner

**JAMMING WITH THE GREAT**—Legendary alto saxophonist Bobby Watson, left, leads the jazz band during the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz's Alaska Public School Tour stop at West Valley High School on Tuesday morning.

## JAZZ: Students get hints from musicians

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you're allowed to have a little fun," said Watson, encouraging the crowd to cheer and dance a little as the band launched into a Herbie Hancock tune.

At the end of the performance, the students gave the musicians a standing ovation.

The group then stopped by band teacher Chris Lubken's class to hear jazz students play and offer

some hints.

Sophomore Steven Bridwell said performing in front of the professionals was both exciting and intimidating.

"It's just awesome to have these professionals here in Alaska," he said.

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