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Grammy-winning jazz bassist back in Philly to help young musicians

March 19, 2012

By Peter Crimmins



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Jazz musician Christian McBride speaks with student bassist Vincent Luciano at the Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, March 19, 2012. (Peter Crimmins/WHYY)

A contemporary jazz great is coming back home to Philadelphia to teach high school kids.

Grammy-winning bass player Christian McBride will teach music workshops on five campuses of the Philadelphia School District this week.

"Rhythm section, I'm curious, do you have a bass drum over there," McBride asked a drummer at the High School of Creative and Performing Arts who was sounding a little thin. "You got to hit the thing harder than that, my man."

McBride is a CAPA alum, graduating in 1989 along with other music luminaries Questlove and Blackthought of the Roots. He returned at the behest of the Thelonius Monk Institute of Jazz, which offers scholarships, training, and mentoring to young musicians.

"We're supposed to do it," said McBride. "Any professional artist, it's their job to inspire younger minds, to help find themselves and help nurture that passion and love that they have their art."

McBride, who won a Grammy last month, is traveling with an all-star band of teenagers, cherry-picked by the Thelonius Monk Institute from high schools around the country. The fact that young musicians shared the stage with McBride was inspiring for many of the teens watching Monday.

"It was an awesome opportunity to hear them play," said Vaughn Wright, 18, who plays saxophone. "It's like, 'Oh man, they are my age. I can play like that, too, if I practice hard enough.'"

This week, the all-star band -- with McBride and singer Lisa Henry -- will be visiting Girard Academic Music Program, the High School of the Future, Northeast High, and Shawmont.

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