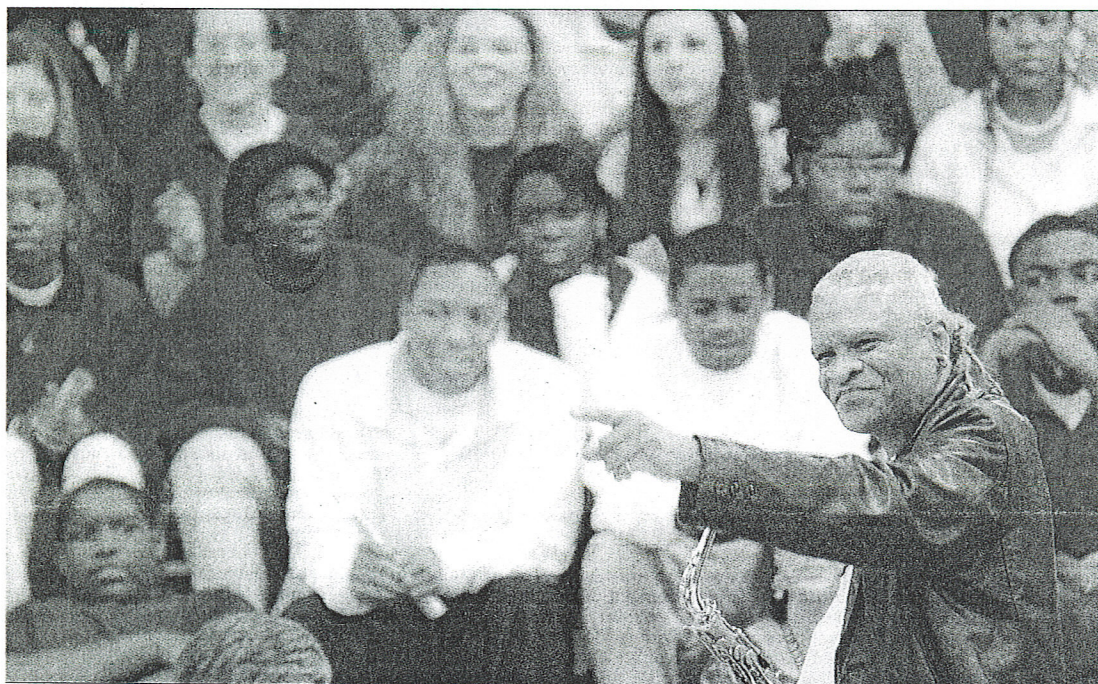


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'GOOD FOR THE SOUL'



Left: Bobby Watson with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz tries to involve Pascagoula High School, Colmer Middle School and Trent Lott Middle School students while the band played at the high school Tuesday morning. **Bottom left:** Derek Niev-ergelt with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz plays for Pascagoula High School, Colmer Middle School and Trent Lott Middle School students Tuesday morning.

Carisa Anderson/The Mississippi Press



Thelonious Monk Institute performs jazz at PHS

By ALLISON MATHER
The Mississippi Press

PASCAGOULA — Faces beamed and applause exploded as jazz saxophonist Bobby Watson made his way around Pascagoula High School gym, beckoning students to get in the groove during a performance Tuesday by musicians with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz.

More than 1,000 students gathered for the concert by world-reknown jazz musicians, part of a tour by the organization to introduce *Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum* to public schools along the Gulf Coast.

The curriculum, an Internet-based jazz curriculum for fifth, eighth and 11th-grade students, presents a historical overview, examines characteristics of various jazz styles, highlights contributions of important performers and composers and explores the social, economic and political contexts within which jazz evolved.

The high school listeners appre-

ciated the performance.

Freshman Mattie Tomes was impressed by the musical talent she heard.

"It's just awesome to play an instrument," she said. "I could never do that."

Junior Sasha Booth said she enjoyed hearing something new.

"It's interesting," she said. "It's different from what we usually listen to."

For senior Antrice Stallworth, the music he heard was about more than just a melody.

"Jazz is very cultural, especially to the black community," he said. "I think jazz is good for the soul, good for rainy days and good for dancing sometimes. Everybody needs to get their jazz on sometimes."

Prior to the concert, institute musicians worked with PHS jazz band students one-on-one during a master class in the band hall.

Band director Jared Leddy said the opportunity was a unique experience for his stu-

dents.

"These guys are jazz artists, so they're going to teach it from a whole other perspective," he said. "(The students) don't get this chance often to come see a group like this, let alone sit down and play with them."

PHS senior Katy Foster said it was good to listen to different musicians with different styles of playing.

Sophomore Darrius McCorvey said the one-on-one time with the professional musicians was beneficial.

"I liked it," he said. "They showed us a lot of things that we probably wouldn't have known if they hadn't come."

Watson said he enjoyed working with the Pascagoula students.

"They're a young band," he said. "They've just been together as a group for about three weeks."

That made working with the

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band even more rewarding, Watson said.

"There are light bulbs going off," he said. "It's another part of the puzzle that you're giving them."

During the concert, each musician spoke between songs, educating students about the music they were playing.

"The greatest thing about jazz is that you can incorporate so many other styles into it you can really personalize it and make it your own," pianist Richard Johnson said.

He encourage the students to listen for the jazz undertones in other music genres.

"You can hear jazz in blues, you can hear jazz in country. You can hear it in hip hop," he said. "Kanye West samples a lot of jazz."

J.B. Dyas, the institute's vice president for education and curriculum development, conducted an interactive music theory lesson, guiding the students through a piece of sheet music as the musicians gradually joined in and the music became more elaborate.

"The first thing you want to know about jazz is that it's America's music," Dyas said.

Developed in the early 20th century in New Orleans, it is a blend of African-American and European styles, he said.

"The key about it is the idea of improvisation," he said. "You never know how it's going to turn out, and that's what makes jazz so exciting."

Thelonious Monk, Jr., son of the legendary jazz innovator



Carisa Anderson/The Mississippi Press

Otis Brown III with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz plays for Pascagoula High School, Colmer Middle School and Trent Lott Middle School students Tuesday morning.

Thelonious Monk Sr., said the visit to PHS was successful

"It's just a little peek for the kids into what this American cultural art form is all about," he said.

Monk admitted the students won't learn everything there is to know in one day.

"What we're trying to do is broaden their horizons in terms of other variety that is out there," he said. "Basically, at the end of the day, we're trying to get kids to ask questions about the music they're listening to."

There is also an "I can do that" component, he said, meaning students who see professional musicians creating music may inspire those students to also become involved in music.

"You want to make them think," he said. "You want to get them engaged."

Northrop Grumman Corporation is the primary corporate sponsor for the Gulf Coast tour.

"Northrop Grumman is devoted to the development of our youths, both culturally and academically," company

spokesman Bill Glenn said.

"This institute is opening the eyes of our children and the influence that jazz has not only through music, but through the thought processes used to create the music."

The institute's tour included a stop in Biloxi Tuesday afternoon before traveling to New Orleans for clinics and concerts the rest of the week.

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