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## Introduction to an American original

Jazz musicians and educators teach high schoolers about their music.

By JIM BEAL JR.  
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

**J**azz went to high school Monday and made an impact on mariachis and marching band members alike.

Representatives of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz started the morning at Highlands High School introducing music students to "Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum," via master classes and a concert.

"Jazz is America's music," said Dr. J.B. Dyas, a bassist and the institute's director of education and curriculum development. "Not only was jazz invented in America by Americans, there is no better example of democracy than a jazz group because students learn about individual freedom and responsibility to the group."

The Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz is a nonprofit education organization established in memory of storied jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk.

Dyas and the band — Bobby Watson (alto saxophone), Lisa Henry (vocals), Richard Johnson (piano), Derek Nievergelt (bass) and Otis Brown III (drums) — moved from Highlands to Jefferson High School later in the day and will visit schools in Austin and Houston this week in observance of Black History Month.

"This is the first time these kids have been exposed to jazz," said David Silva, Highlands' mariachi director. "It's a great experience for students to be able to hear jazz, opera, all kinds of music."

Vocalist Henry, a winner of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition, emphasized technique and delivery.

"Just technique is important," she said, "but emotion is more important. One thing an audience will never forgive is lack of emotion. And you have to have fun with the music."

The band generated fun while putting a student group through its paces.

"They gave us little things to do to help us play better," said baritone saxophonist Kate Grosse, 16, a junior who also plays flute and piccolo in the marching band.

"They told us to strive to go out there, find things we love and play."

"For young people, it's important to see us up close and hear us play," said saxophonist Watson, a noted bandleader, soloist and music educator. "Hearing the music live has always had great impact. I still remember the impact these kinds of programs had on me when I was in school."



**ABOVE:** Bobby Watson, a jazz musician and educator from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, answers questions from Highlands High School students during 'Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum.'

**LEFT:** Derek Nievergelt, bass player with the band from the institute, prepares for an assembly at the school's auditorium. Musicians from the institute were at the school for a jazz band clinic, vocal master class and an assembly program.