



PROVIDING JAZZ RESOURCES FOR IOWA'S EDUCATORS



JEI BOARD

**PRESIDENT
KELLY WEBER**

**PRESIDENT-ELECT
KELLI SWEHLA**

**PAST PRESIDENT
DENNIS GREEN**

**VICE-PRESIDENT
STEVE SHANLEY**

**SECRETARY
JENNIFER TIEDE**

**TREASURER
JEFF ROBILLIARD**

[Join us on](#)

facebook

[Listen to Jazz](#)



President's Message Kelly Weber

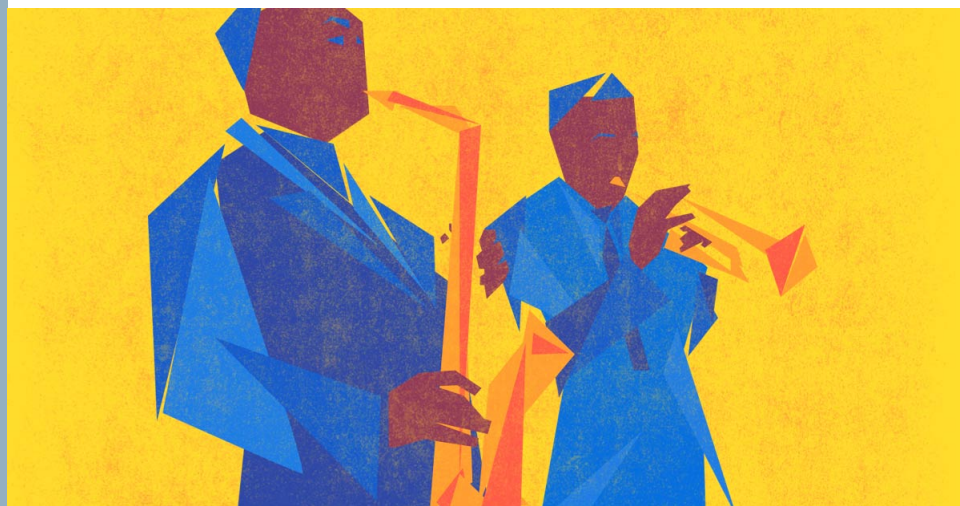
I hope this newsletter finds you refreshed from winter break and ready to dive back into your classrooms with renewed energy and enthusiasm. In this issue we get to learn from Iowa's best resources- some of it's finest faculty and musicians. In this issue:

**Meet the New Faces of the Jazz Department at the
University of Iowa**

**Damani Phillips' "Listening to Hear: Tips and Guidelines
for Close Listening to Black Music"**

**The Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra: Their History, Their
Mission, and What They Can Do for Your Ensembles**

The JEI Clinician Database Project



The University of Iowa Jazz Faculty Quintet (The IJFQ) **Fall Recruiting Tour**

The newly-formed IJFQ consists of the newly-solidified jazz faculty of the University of Iowa jazz studies program. UI jazz has undergone some significant changes in the past 4 years and is quickly positioning itself to be a jazz program of rising national repute and significance. As one of the only colleges in the nation to boast an all African-American jazz faculty, Dr. Damani Phillips (saxophone/jazz area head), Dr. William Menefield (piano), Curtis Taylor (trumpet) and Angelo Stokes (drums/percussion) are joined by guest bassist Brandon Meeks to form this exceptional group. Each group member is an educator, performer, recording artist and composer in their own right – touting numerous albums, compositions, movie appearances, international engagements and major music festival appearances between them. Accomplishments among the faculty include appearance on a Grammy-winning album, the composition and debut of a full-length opera, performances/teaching engagements as US Department of State music ambassadors to Africa and Asia, regular national and international festival performances and teaching engagements, a published author and hundreds of appearances with internationally recognized jazz performers/musical acts.

Desert Island Albums

Damani – Idle Moments by Grant Green or Gumbo Nouveau by Nicholas Payton (sorry... you've asked the hardest question **EVER!**)

Curtis Taylor - *Fingerpainting: The Music Of Herbie Hancock* by Christian McBride, Mark Whitfield, and Nicholas Payton

William Menefield – Kind of Blue by Miles Davis

Angelo Stokes – “What’s Goin’ On” by Marvin Gaye.



Meet the University of Iowa Jazz Faculty Quintet (IJFQ)

Dr. Damani Phillips

**UI Assoc. Professor of Jazz (saxophone) /
African American Studies and Jazz Area Head**



Dr. Damani Phillips is a native of Pontiac, MI, and currently serves as head of the Jazz Studies program and Associate Professor of African American Studies at the University of Iowa. Phillips has earned Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from DePaul University and The University of Kentucky in classical saxophone, a second Master of Music degree in Jazz Studies from Wayne State University and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Jazz Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder; becoming the first African American in the country to do so. An active performer, pedagogue and lecturer, Phillips has performed, taught and lectured throughout the world. He previously served on the faculty of Grinnell College and Oakland University, and is actively sought as a guest artist, clinician, presenter and adjudicator throughout the nation. He has performed with artists/groups such as Lewis Nash, Christian McBride, Wycliffe Gordon, Bobby McFerrin, Marcus Belgrave, Terrell Stafford, Hank Jones, Red Holloway and Pat Bianchi among many others. Phillips has released 6 albums as a bandleader and published his first book "What Is This Thing Called Soul: Conversations on Black Culture and Jazz Education" in 2017.

Courses taught: Jazz improvisation, director of JCL (big band), applied woodwinds, jazz for educators, Black music courses for non-majors, jazz culture

Prof. Curtis Taylor

UI Lecturer of Jazz Studies (trumpet and brass)

Curtis Taylor has performed and recorded with Patrice Rushen, Billy Childs, Gary Novak, Bob Sheppard, Ed Motta, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Rodney Whitaker, Antonio Hart, as well as great gospel luminaries Karen Clark-Sheard, Kierra Sheard, and The Singletons. Taylor's stint with jazz pianist Cyrus Chestnut included a notable concert performance at Kennedy Center which was recorded for NPR's *Jazzset*. In 2014, Taylor relocated to Southern California where he worked with producer Kamau Kenyatta on Gregory Porter's GRAMMY-winning album *Liquid Spirit*.





Prof. Angelo Stokes
**UI Lecturer of Jazz Studies (drum
 set and percussion)**

Angelo L. Stokes can effortlessly be described as a “Universal Percussionist” and has accomplished what many men only dare to dream and are unable to fathom. Angelo has been a protégé of Marcus Belgrave since the tender age of 16 while he attended The Detroit School for the Performing Arts and has had the distinction of performing with Aretha Franklin, Toni Tennille, Lou Rawls, Bo Diddley, Stevie Wonder and an innumerable amount of other internationally respected musicians. Angelo has increased his classical ability and discipline on various percussive instruments as a former member of the United States Air Force Band of The West and as a private music instructor. He continues to innovate and re-establish the world of the percussive arts with a sundry of global techniques learned through continued studies and the modest acknowledgement that his gift will only be made stronger through the acceptance of acumen from the artists that he has the privilege of sharing the stage with.

Courses taught: Jazz combos, jazz musicianship, History of Hip Hop, Jazz Cultures of the World, applied jazz drums, electronic beat production

Dr. William Menefield
**UI Asst. Professor of Jazz (piano)
 and Composition**

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, William earned his Bachelor of Music from university of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (2005) and Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Texas at Austin (2011), both in music composition. He has recorded two albums as a solo artist and has also been featured as a soloist with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (2005) and the Cincinnati Opera (CO) (2006, 2013). In 2019, William was commissioned by the CO to compose “Fierce”, a one act opera which debuted in July of 2022. He has also performed with a variety of notable musicians including Roy Ayers, Clark Terry, David “Fathead” Newman, Gary Bartz, Steve Wilson, and Javon Jackson. William currently serves as the Assistant Professor of Jazz Studies at the University of Iowa.

Courses taught: Jazz improvisation, director of Black Pop Music Ensemble, jazz composition and arranging, applied jazz piano

Listening to Hear: Tips and Guidelines for Close Listening to Black Music

Dr. Damani Phillips

Jazz Studies Area Head and Associate Professor of African American Studies
University of Iowa

Apart from teaching jazz to jazz studies students, a significant part of my responsibilities at the University of Iowa is helping novice listeners learn to not just listen – but **HEAR** – jazz and related forms of African American music. Over the years, I have come to learn that even our college jazz majors lack effective strategies for close listening. Considering the fact that we teach a music form where aural learning and student emulation are pivotal in building musical competency and internalization of jazz, this is the one area of a student’s musical development that simply cannot afford to be neglected. Yet, I am continually surprised by the difficulty that young students experience with the notion of careful listening that pushes beyond merely entertainment purposes.

Our students will likely need our help in learning to listen for comprehension and meaning – the notion of listening with the goal of **HEARING**. Make no mistake folks, “listening” and “hearing” are related, but not the same! The latter is not a skill that comes natural to typical student in 2022. Consider sharing the following tips and strategies with your students as you help them cultivate the type of ear that feeds their musicianship and comprehensive understanding of jazz music:

1. Listening for *understanding* rather than merely entertainment will require a different level of focus than you may be accustomed to. Some recordings/performances (i.e. jazz) are customarily longer in duration than typical popular music, as the creative process of the musician usually dictates song length rather than commercial airplay requirements. Be prepared for that fact, and work to maintain focus during your time spent listening. Makes all the difference in reaping maximum gains from time invested.

2. As you listen, still your mind, close your eyes and dedicate your energy to allowing the music to wash over you. If you are listening, just *listen* – and nothing else during that time. The reality of dividing your attention in multiple directions at once is that depth of focus is sacrificed. I think that you may find the time spent with the music infinitely more beneficial to your understanding and personal growth if this advice is heeded. Maximize the benefits of the time you invest. Additionally, traditional jazz pedagogy focuses on the teaching of “things” that are assembled into a performance, but regularly overlooks the aesthetically-driven intangibles at the very core of jazz music’s essence. Do not be so bogged down in identifying technique-based “things” that are happening in the music that you overlook those emotional elements that give the music *life* rather than mere existence. How the music *feels* (both in terms of emotional aesthetic and groove) matters infinitely more than many care to acknowledge.

3. Listen to recordings in their entirety. Just because a recording doesn’t immediately strike you as interesting doesn’t mean that it will remain that way. The spirit and energy of many Black music styles are infamous for spontaneously shifting in the middle of a song! Give everything you listen to a fair shake before dismissing it as undesirable.

4. The primary space for individuality in pop performances occurs during the delivery of the melody/lyrics. This focus shifts in more complex music genres such as jazz, where the improvised solos is the primary vehicle for expression of individuality. To get a glimpse of the true personality of a musician, pay close attention to their work in these parts of the song. That is where the magic happens and the artist's individual voice shines brightest. This is the part of the song where the artist is (hopefully) most vulnerable and sharing that which no one else on earth can authentically share.

5. While elements of preconceived composition are important (particularly so in large ensemble jazz), look at improvised solos as the telling of a literal story told in sound instead of words. Much like a good story, a good solo should “unfold” and have rises/falls in energy, intensity and excitement. See if you can identify the contour of this sonic story (or lack thereof!). How does the contour of this story make you feel when you hear it? Did you find the artist's story to be compelling – and more importantly, why or why not? How do the sounds the player has chosen impact you emotionally? What does the player do with those sounds to enhance emotional communication and meaning? Does playing fast, loud and high automatically equate to heightened energy/intensity, or are there other means of achieving that musical goal?

6. Be aware that you are not expected to like everything that you listen to. Some music will resonate strongly with you, while others will bore you to sleep – and that is absolutely okay! What is most important is that you learn to identify what EXACTLY about the music makes you *feel the way that you feel and think the way that you think*. Most importantly, cultivate and/or improve your ability to articulate your impressions intelligently. Push beyond the “what” and delve into the “why and how”.

7. Make a habit of listening to selected recordings multiple times before generating your response and/or forming your opinion. The “one and done” approach to listening will not serve you well as a listener and budding jazz musician. Be patient, be tenacious and more importantly, do not be hasty in casting judgement!

8. Whenever possible, try to run a quick internet search on assigned listening to gain a basic understanding of the music's historical context. Hearing Coltrane's A Love Supreme is one thing, but giving that album a listen with historical, cultural and spiritual context firmly in mind transforms the lens through which we see this album and completely transforms our understanding of the sounds and approaches heard. The “why and how” of A Love Supreme fundamentally alters our understanding of “what” this landmark album embodies.

9. The pairing of technical music knowledge/study with appropriate cultural education: expand your focus from merely “what” to include “why and how”. Let's face facts – if you teach jazz, you are indeed teaching Black music. With this being the case, competency in teaching jazz music in a comprehensive and culturally-competent way means that in addition to notes, rhythms, chords and articulations you should also understand the foundational tenants of African American music. While the music is practiced by musicians of all races and nationalities around the globe, the very foundation of the music is conclusively rooted in African American music-making practices.

The centrality of improvisation, the prevalence - and adaptive nature - of the syncopation used, the bending of musical rules to the expressive needs of the performer, the music's demand for individuality – every one of these elements are directly attributable to African American music. More importantly, pushing beyond the technical elements that comprise a typical jazz performance and getting to the cultural, historical and expressive reasons that the music is what it is means that all who teach and perform this music need to have a firm grasp of this cultural knowledge. Understand that your student likely will not come to you with an understanding of these elements of the music, and that you as educators will need to help them develop this knowledge. Student ability to listen to the music with a fully-informed ear will suffer if we provide anything less than a comprehensive, culturally-respectful knowledge of the music. This is equally important for teachers and students alike.

A Few Quality Listening Examples Well Worth Your Time

Considering all that is stated above, it seems only right to share a few listening examples that I have run across that are great conversation starters and recordings rich with lots to discuss with your students. Furthermore, I am choosing examples that are not very well known with the hope that these recordings be a relatively new experience when you hear them. It always helps when the teachers and students are “in the trenches” side-by-side and grappling with new content together. Consider the following examples for use in your classrooms:

1. “But Not For Me” from Live at Skullers by Ray Brown (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8hWa9zdB8Q>)

Benny Green's solo is the entire song, and one of the most impressive examples of solo building that I know of.

2. “Bolo Blues” from album Out of the Forrest by Jimmy Forrest (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7o1ofwntSQ>)

3. “Green Dolphin Street” from album The ‘58 Sessions by Miles Davis (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncPrzjAZLwg>)

Four heroes of the music playing side by side – each with an improvisational approach, spirit, and mode of expression all their own.

4. “St. James Infirmary” from album Gumbo Nouveau by Nicholas Payton (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8YfuttFsXs&list=OLAK5uy_kNgl12JrUMdyuT-eUSpNFutTub-OcfmSY&index=11)

5. “The Lamp Is Low” Youtube only video recording from Emmett Cohen (Patrick Bartley, alto sax) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPVwEEJF4pU>)

New young saxophone standout who has clear connection to the lineage of jazz history while still going a direction that is entirely his own!

The Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra: Their History, Their Mission, and What They Can Do for Your Ensembles

Since 2017, the Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra has met to perform across the state of Iowa for the purpose of showcasing the artistry of women jazz musicians and inspiring the next generation. Founded by Toni LeFebvre when she was a graduate student in Music Education at the University of Iowa along with former UI Music Education professor, Dr. Erin Wehr, IWJO has had quite a special journey of development. Our favorite gigs are those where we can reach middle and high school musicians. Some of the Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra's most notable events include performances at the Dorian Summer Music Camp (Decorah, 2018), Five Seasons Chamber Music Festival (Cedar Rapids, 2019), Iowa Jazz Championships (Ames, 2019), University of Iowa Trumpet Festival (Iowa City, 2022), and KCCK's "Jazz Under the Stars" (Cedar Rapids, 2022). Perhaps our most significant and uplifting outreach event thus far occurred in February of 2022 when IWJO collaborated with Wes Anderson and his jazz bands at Greene County High School in Jefferson, IA for a "Java and Jazz" afternoon we won't soon forget.

In the Fall of 2021, Wes Anderson reached out with an idea for how he could get a collaboration going between the Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra and his high school jazz bands. After discussing the logistics, GCHS hosted "Java and Jazz", featuring IWJO, on February 19th, 2022. The afternoon kicked off with the Greene County High School Jazz Band playing a swinging set in the cafeteria while parents, community members, and patrons enjoyed a warm cup of coffee generously donated by a local cafe. Then, IWJO and GCHS musicians joined forces for a jazz combo jam session. Finally, everyone shifted into the high school's stunning new auditorium for a set by the Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra, with GCHS students front and center in the audience. High school musicians were even invited to join in on a tune. Here is Wes's testimonial on what the full experience brought to him and his students:

"Last February, the Greene County Jazz Band hosted its first Java and Jazz concert. We wanted the event to serve as both a fundraiser concert and an opportunity for our students to hear and play alongside great jazz musicians. We were able to secure a grant from Greene County Schools BOOST to bring in a professional group to kick off this new tradition.

The Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra was the obvious choice for our inaugural event. My students sat in the front row of our auditorium during the IWJO set, dumbstruck by the power and balance of the brass section, the virtuosity of the reeds, and the creativity of the rhythm section and improvisation. It was an hour of opportunities for my students to see "Jazz Band" at its finest.

In the aftermath of our concert with the Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra, several of my students went on a field trip to watch and help out at Iowa Jazz Championships. They set an audacious goal to take our jazz program to the next level and qualify for IJC, and have been working much harder this year. Several students have started working on Jazz and Electronic music composition since hearing Lynne Hart play her amazing arrangement of "Dark Eyes". My students had an incredible, meaningful, and inspirational experience with the IWJO, and I'd bring them back in a heartbeat!"

The Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra returns the sentiment to Wes Anderson and his magnificent, welcoming students wholeheartedly. This is the exact type of partnership we seek to foster with middle school and high school jazz programs throughout our state.

All of us in IWJO can point to role models that have helped us to get to where we are today. Each of our former teachers and professors have helped mold us in one way or another. We have that in common, although we've all had very different journeys in arriving at this point. Even though we've all had outstanding guidance, we still recognize that young women may want and need a role model that they can relate to more closely. It is our goal and mission to be as visible as possible so that all young students, but especially girls, know that there is a future for them in music and especially in jazz. If you are interested in setting up a collaboration with the Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra and your school jazz program, please reach out to iowawomensjazzorchestra@gmail.com or visit the contact page on our website, www.iowajazzwomen.com.

Toni LeFebvre
Kelli Swehla
Co-Leaders of the Iowa Women's Jazz Orchestra



Sprucing Up Your Solo Section

Most jazz ensembles make good use of rehearsal time by running the shout sections, the intros, the transitions, the endings, and all other spots that have nearly everyone playing at the same time. Keeping everyone actively engaged certainly delivers more bang for your buck. However, many jazz ensembles falter on stage when the solo section arrives. Here are some thoughts that can help keep your performance strong throughout the entire chart.

Understanding the tune: I appreciate hearing bands play selections that are either jazz standards or music penned by important writers. It's a great way to introduce students (and audiences) to quality repertoire. Be sure that the students know a little about the tune – the composer, the arranger, its historical context, and an overview of how the tune works. I like my entire ensemble to understand & follow the form of the composition (12 bar blues, 32 bar rhythm changes, AAB song form), and I often speak to them with that terminology. Having two options for understanding the form allows my students to count it, feel it, or blend the two. Most traditional jazz harmonies operate around complete & incomplete turnarounds (major or minor). These building blocks reveal big picture key centers that can help the improviser not get spooked by an onslaught of chord changes. Be aware of that one bar or that one chord that doesn't quite fit. It likely lies outside of the diatonic set. Nailing that particular twist each time around shows the informed listener that the performer knows the tune. (plus, it sounds way better)

Developing the soloist: Don't feel obligated to use the soloist assigned in the arrangement. Most writers won't take umbrage with you if you stick the solo intended for 1st tenor in the hands of your 2nd trombone, especially if that is a better fit for your ensemble. Be sure that any background responsibilities are picked up within the section, preserving the color & compositional goal of the writer. Consider writing out the chord/scale relationships (vertically or horizontally) from the solo section on manuscript paper. Create a playalong track with easy-to-use software (like iRealPro) or by recording the rhythm section banging out a few choruses. Those audio tools can provide lots of contextual information for the improviser, and are designed to be used during any individual practice session. In rehearsal and on stage, position the soloist by the rhythm section. The soloist will be able to hear the rhythm section better, the rhythm section will be able to hear the soloist better, and (hopefully) the two parties will work together to build collective musical moments.

Making the backgrounds work: It's pretty common in a large ensemble setting for the horn backgrounds in a solo section to not get any love. When a soloist is out front improvising, playing the horn backgrounds with artistic integrity is equally important for that section of the chart. The writer has spent quality time on the background lines, voicings, dynamic shading, and direction. While the soloist is digging in and the rhythm section is supporting that person, the horn backgrounds provide accurate static harmony & form assistance. A general rule of thumb I have in my ensemble for the horn backgrounds & rhythm section is to be sure that everyone can hear the soloist. They don't need to hear any specific things in the solo but, if they can't hear the instrument itself, then they're too loud. This isn't an absolute rule, but it makes everyone listen a little closer and be aware that we are operating as a unit.

Mix & match in the rhythm section: aka “the band within the band”. I heard a famous basketball coach say that each player on the court needed to know their role, stay in their role, and star in the role. It’s important that each member of the rhythm section understands their particular responsibilities. This knowledge defines their uniqueness and value, helping them better identify how to contribute to the group. When setting up, get cozy and maintain a line of sight. Doing this enables the students to look at each other at certain points within the chart to confirm (yep, this is the bridge) and communicate (hey, where are we?). Figure out a setup that works best for your rhythm section, and then make the extra effort to maintain that design in all playing environments.

Each instrument has unique things to offer, and each player of that instrument has personal strengths to showcase (and weaknesses to develop). The piano & guitar essentially provide the same role in a solo section, comping for the soloist. Be thoughtful about how rhythmic the comping is, assuring that the harmony provided to the soloist has a moment to resonate and that the rhythmic material is in time. Traditionally, those two instruments don’t comp simultaneously. The bass outlines the harmony and provides a steady source of time. The bass can walk quarter notes, use half notes in a “two-feel”, or create simple & repeatable rhythmic ideas. The drums help color the time, push the soloist, and emphasize stuff. Digging around in the stick bag for assorted sound choices (brushes, mallets, sticks, hot rods) is a quick & easy way to change things up. If you opt to incorporate some latin hand percussion, position them amongst the aforementioned players so that they are contributing members of the rhythm section.

After having determined what your options are, experiment with different combinations of players and colors. Try a “two-feel” bass figure with a rhythmic guitar part and hi-hat, use brushes for up-tempo swing sections, or combine sustained piano chords with a walking bass but leave the drums out. The soloist will often play differently within these assorted scenarios, and trying something new could re-energize the chart. Occasionally I ask the soloists in my ensemble to choose the type of rhythm section support they prefer. They pick settings that are comfortable and interesting. sparking their creativity often leads to a more enjoyable playing experience for everyone in the band.

Putting it all together: When finalizing what happens in the solo section, keep a few things in mind: be sure that the rhythm section knows what they’re doing, how to do it, and with whom they are playing behind. Be sure that the soloist really knows the chord changes, follows the form, and has a few strategies for improvising. Be sure that the section leaders play with purpose and musicality in the horn backgrounds. and ultimately, be sure that YOU know what works best for the ensemble, how to achieve that, and what the experience is like for the listener.

Mike Giles :: saxophone & jazz studies :: Iowa State University :: mgiles@iastate.edu

The JEI Clinician Database Project

When teaching an aurally learned language like jazz, having the best sets of ears work with your students is crucial. Clinics provide students with the chance to learn from the masters and provide directors a chance to sharpen their own skills.

The Jazz Educators of Iowa is happy to aid directors in their search for clinicians by providing the JEI Clinician Database.

This google spreadsheet provides a list of educators in the area willing to offer their expertise to your students. You are also able to search specifically for educators who specialize in specific topics, instruments, and age groups.

This is a living, breathing document that will be updated periodically. Bookmark it and check back when planning your next clinicians and guest artists!

Click [HERE](#) to view the JEI clinician database.

Want to add your name to the growing list? We would love to see as many names as possible! Fill out this form with your information to be added.

Click [HERE](#) to add your name to the JEI clinician database

Encourage Your Students To Audition for the All State Jazz Bands

To audition, students will need to submit a recording. The recording will consist of a required etude and an optional, but encouraged, demonstration of improvisation. A few instruments (for example drum set) have additional requirements. The deadline for submissions is March 1 and you can find all the details at <https://www.jeiowa.org/all-state-jazz>. JEI members get a discount on the audition fee.

JAZZ EDUCATORS OF IOWA

www.jeiowa.org

[Listen to Jazz](#)



[Join us on](#)

facebook

Renew your membership today:

- **Renew online at this link (<https://jazz-educators-of-iowa.square.site>)**
- **Download membership form and mail a check at this link (https://www.jeiowa.org/uploads/home/registration_pdf/1/JEIRegForm_New.pdf)**

"Jazz is about being in the moment"

Herbie Hancock

The JEI Newsletter is
edited by
Michael Omarzu