



The Wilmington Youth Jazz Band is committed to the education and cultural enrichment of youth through the learning of jazz. Not only does WYJB help students discover themselves as they hone their musical talents, it provides a safe, artistic place where they can learn and develop valuable social and interpersonal skills.

FROM A FEATURED SPONSOR

“The Wilmington Youth Jazz Band is an excellent organization designed to uplift the quality of music, especially jazz in the local community, state and throughout the country. The state of Delaware is fortunate to have dedicated professionals to extend the scope of work and the influence of jazz in upcoming generations. The World is a better place because of the interest of our young people and their parents in the fostering of musical excellence in America.”

Rueben Salters, Chairman/Founder
Inner City Cultural League.

Dear WYJB Board,

Thank you so much for the opportunity you have given me. Spending my summer at Berklee College of Music has impacted me in tremendous ways, not just in music, but also in life. During my time there, I have met talented musicians from all over the world who have taught me things about music and culture that I could not learn anywhere else. Spending time with so many people of different ages and backgrounds has made me a better person and musician.

The instruction at Berklee was also amazing. Every instructor that I had excelled greatly at their instrument and left me with lessons that I will be able to use for the rest of my life. I am not saying that it was easy, because I had many tests and homework assignments, and spent long nights in the practice rooms. Even though I had a great time, it was still college, and in those five weeks I have never played and studied so much in my life. The hard work definitely paid off in the end.

Boston is such an amazing city and I loved living in a place where there is always something to do and somewhere to go. I have learned so much from Berklee and I am now more dedicated to music than I have ever been. Thank you again for giving me this life changing experience.

Sincerely,
Kayla White

Wilmington Youth Jazz Band Testimonial

1/20/16

It is hard to think of an experience in your life and ask yourself how your life might be different if that experience never existed or happened. In a few instances, you have that one experience and know that life would be different without it, but couldn't possibly know how badly you needed that experience. The Wilmington Youth Jazz Band was that experience for me.

As a young middle schooler, I was introduced to the WYJB and the ever so radiant Miss Fostina Dixon-Kilgoe. Apart from my school's band, this was really the first time I had branched out to play with a new, different crowd. As I went through the band, I saw this as an opportunity for personal improvement. How do I become better than the people before and around me? How do I become better than myself? Apart from this inner yearning for self-improvement, I took those weekend rehearsals as a time to have fun: to play in the company of friends and learn at the same time. As I have become older, I began not to take a different look at WYJB, but I have made additions to my feelings and thoughts.

My first jazz combos were formed because of the comradery of WYJB. I would never have met the cats I had if it wasn't for WYJB. I also would have never been influenced by so many instructors in the band, namely Mr. Wilby Fletcher. These are the obvious ways in which I strengthened my musicianship; however, by being in an environment that the WYJB provided, I was able to realize something greater. This helped with my (music) discipline by being forced to be in this situation of "playing." Let me explain. As a musician, you always have to be 'on'. You can't afford not to be. I take this in my life as well. I always see myself as needing to be 'on' always. By playing and being actively involved in the WYJB, I was able to strengthen my confidence; if you really know me, you would think I already had all the confidence in the world. As I write this, I am reminded of the time where Norman Connors played at the then Wilmington Music School. His band was practicing and I decided to hop in and play some auxiliary percussion. Risk taking is key. I learned this early on, and the WYJB was how I channeled this.

Now more than ever, the WYJB is needed in this ever changing environment; that also means that the band and its structure must change, too in order to compete with the society around it. My time in the band saw arguably the most disciplined and committed players of its time. To name a few: Abraham McIlvaine, Vernon James Jr., the Buzdygons, Will Esterling, and Saeed Abuwi the younger. Situations have changed, the culture has changed. Jazz is dead. Commitment to an art form is dead. It is up to institutions like the WYJB to uphold the teachings of "jazz", musicianship and discipline. These values that I have come to learn have become integral in all aspects of my life. I truly would not know where I would be today if the environment that the WYJB provided did not exist.

Gregory Dexter

FROM A PAST PROGRAM GRADUATE

Vernon James Jr. Testimonial 7-31-14

Vernon James Jr. will be twenty four years old in a few months. He has completed his course of study and graduated from Berklee College of music with a BA degree. Vernon is presently working towards his certification in the Delaware School system. He teaches privately and performs publicly as a musician.

Q: Prior to joining the WYJB what was your musical experience/interest?

VERNON: I was interested in jazz but the WYJB brought the music more alive for me. The overall process offered a new challenge.

Q: What did you like about being in the WYJB?

VERNON: I got to meet a lot of musicians my age who was interested in the same thing I was. The dynamics and atmosphere had a very positive influence for my life.

Q: Do you feel that your participation in the WYJB influenced your career path?

VERNON: Absolutely! The WYJB helped my career path. The financial scholarship that that I got from the WYJB to go to Berklee encouraged me and was influential in my wanting to make music my career.

Q: How did your participation in music influence your life?

VERNON: To be a musician, you have to have a lot of patience. Patience is a great attribute and makes you a better person.

FROM A CURRENT GRADUATE

On: Jun 06/02/14 12:21 PM

Dear Ms. Fostina and the WYJB board,

I would like to thank you all for the scholarship money that I received at the annual concert several weeks ago. I've been a part of the band for three seasons, and I felt welcomed by all of the instructors, parents, and peers during my time as a member. I will attend West Chester University in the fall, and plan on pursuing several of their music ensembles while I am there. I cannot begin to describe my gratitude for all of the opportunities, and life lessons that I have received and learned as a WYJB member. Thank you all for everything, and best of luck in the future.

Keith Criddell, Jr.

ANECDOTE FROM A CURRENT STUDENT

Nathan Jacobs: A Drummer's Story

Mr. & Mrs. Jacobs are pleased with the growth and progress of their son Nathan since joining the Wilmington Youth Jazz Band (WYJB). Following in footsteps of his father, young Nathan has been playing the drums since he was just two years old.

For seven years, Nathan would only play at home and in church. According to Jacob's mother, "He was comfortable with what he already knew and was nervous about playing outside of the church or home." As involved, caring parents, she and her husband wanted to see their son grow so they enrolled in a Middletown Delaware music school.

Since joining WYJB in at the age of eight (8) Nathan has grown in many ways. Not only is he more social, but according to his mother, “He now functions out of his comfort zone.” In addition to playing at various venues in Delaware, young Mr. Jacobs entertains the audience with his drum solos. He played drums by ear before joining WYJB but when he saw other kids reading music he was inspired. He stepped up on his own according to Mrs. Jacobs and is now learning how to read music; secretly, what his parents always wanted him to do.

In the beginning Nathan resisted the idea of joining the Wilmington Youth Jazz Band but now Nathan is looking forward to his second year as WYJB drummer and so is the rest of the family.

FROM A MUSIC LOVER

“The young musicians in Wilmington Youth Jazz Band are inspiring. Their concerts that I have had the pleasure of attending were full of gifted students who clearly loved their music. Their skills are amazing and improve every time I come to enjoy their music. Their enthusiasm and joy in jazz is clearly encouraged by their gifted conductor/ teacher Fostina Dixon-Kilgoe. I look forward to attending future concerts.” - **Susan Olds Townsend**

FROM AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

“When I first attended the Wilmington Youth Jazz band showcase concert in 2013, I will admit that I did not know what to expect. I purchased a ticket to support a young family member, and as a former educator myself I have been in attendance at many school music performances featuring children of varying ages and music experience levels. Much to my surprise and wonderment, within the first few bars of the first song I was absolutely blown away! The high quality of the musicianship was far beyond my expectations, as was the rich sound of the band. I couldn’t wait to get home and tell all of my family and friends how great a jazz concert they had missed. People should not underestimate these young people based on the size and ages of the WYJB musicians, they are fantastic.” – **Bob Hite**