

Beavercreek Weekend of Jazz Background Information

WOJ Objectives and Description

The Beavercreek Weekend of Jazz, “*Where the Future of Jazz Meets the Legends of Jazz!*”, is an annual jazz festival organized and presented by the Beavercreek Music Parents Association and held the first weekend in March. The primary objective of the Weekend of Jazz is to expose the youth of Beavercreek, Ohio and surrounding communities to new and exciting forms of jazz music and provide them opportunities to learn about careers in music directly from professional jazz musicians.

Thursday evening opens the festival with performances by the jazz bands of the Beavercreek schools – Ankeney and Ferguson Middle Schools and Beavercreek High School (Jazz Ensembles 1 and 2). These performances are observed by an on-stage jazz professional, who offers constructive critiques of each performance and encouragement for the young musicians.

Each year two professional jazz ensembles are invited to perform during the festival. Every opportunity is seized to give children direct access to professional musicians, to ask them questions about their careers and to seek and receive advice and tutoring on their own performance skills. This year, Sylvan Street will perform in concert on Friday evening of the festival. The second headline act, returning after 6 years, is the Woody Herman Orchestra, who will perform Saturday evening.

Finally, the Weekend of Jazz Saturday program, up until the evening performance by the headline act, provides performance opportunities for a number of middle, junior high, and high school jazz bands from Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. We enlist the help of professional jazz musicians, clinicians, and educators to observe, evaluate, and critique these performances. Immediately following each school’s concert, a professional panel member conducts a 20 – 30 minute private clinic for each band, provides them feedback, and actively works with the band members to improve their performances. Over the years, it has become apparent that this opportunity to perform for and work with professional jazz musicians is one of the highlights of the weekend for our school jazz band members. All performances and clinics are conducted in the facilities of Beavercreek High School in Beavercreek, Ohio.

All middle, junior high, and high school jazz bands are eligible to perform, and no prior performance or competition experience is required to participate in the Weekend of Jazz. There are no classes or divisions of bands; all bands that choose to perform, do so on an open basis. All performing bands receive a plaque to commemorate their participation and to show our appreciation. Each registered band pays a \$125 entry fee to perform at Weekend of Jazz. This fee does not include admission to the jazz performances on Friday or Saturday evening.

While the students’ musical education is a primary goal of the Weekend of Jazz, we are also committed to educating the community at large. We purposefully invite professional musicians from many different styles of jazz to perform, with the express intent of introducing the audience to new musical experiences each year. Our surveys indicate, year after year, that audiences arrive at the auditorium with some reservations about the type of music they are to hear but leave excited and interested in a new area of jazz music.

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It is also our firm belief that in conducting this festival, and the manner in which we conduct it, will lead to an increasing and more appreciative jazz music audience. As with any art form, jazz can only survive if there are sufficient patrons to support a vibrant and diverse community of performers. While this aspect of the Weekend of Jazz may not directly “enrich the future” of the arts in Ohio, the beneficiaries of this festival are much more likely to support the performing arts in all forms throughout their lives.

The Weekend of Jazz operates entirely with volunteers from the Beavercreek community. These volunteers not only help with the execution of the festival, but are integrally involved in all aspects of planning and organizing the festival. We have also solicited advice and support from the Beavercreek City Council and the mayor’s office, as well as many business leaders in the Chamber of Commerce. While our impact on the community may be relatively small in terms of numbers of people attending the performances as a percentage of the total population, it has a deep and lasting effect. Every year we introduce new people to the joys of jazz music, and that is the very essence of the festival.