

'09 GUIDE TO SUMMER JAZZ PROGRAMS



SJW faculty member
Ndugu Chanler with student

CAMP SWING

A survey of U.S. summer jazz programs for 2009

By Mike Shanley

AS JAZZ PROGRAMS have established deep roots on the college level, so too have a number of summer camps cropped up to assist college hopefuls who wish to develop their chops outside the classroom. But as five particular camps attest, the camps aren't just for kids anymore. Considering how jazz draws on a musician's experience as well as skill, the camps work hard at providing a natural setting that allows musicians to grow.

The **Stanford Jazz Workshop** (www.stanfordjazz.org), which began in 1972, consists of a three-week program: two weeks of residential Jazz Camp open to students aged 12 to 17, and one of Jazz Residency, open to advanced-level youth and adults. (The latter requires students under 18 to audition.) With faculty that has included Stan Getz and Dizzy Gillespie in its early years and Donald Harrison and Lee Konitz more recently, participants get a chance to sit at the feet of the masters in jam sessions, master classes and even an ice cream social. During the camps, the school's Tresidder Memorial Union also hosts the Stanford Jazz Festival, where the guest faculty members combine forces onstage.

Jim Nadel, artistic and executive director of the Workshop, repeatedly talks about "community learning" when discussing his program. "There are so many valid approaches to jazz improvisation,"

he says. "And if you can have a community where a lot of different approaches are represented, students will get exposed to all kinds of paths to the music. Ultimately, they have to find their own voice, and they can do that best in the community."

This plays into the non-audition policy at the camp, which can take 200 students a year. "If we only took the students that could already play great, we could miss the students that *should* be here, because they bring their life experiences as well."

Vita Muir, who founded the **Litchfield Jazz Camp** (www.litchfieldjazzfest.com), as part of Litchfield Performing Arts, agrees that a non-competitive policy is important. "We're not going to have a 13-year-old send us a tape and say, 'Sorry, kid, you're not good enough,'" she says. "Because

it's not about us, it's about them. All they need is an interest in coming."

Litchfield, going into its 13th summer, has four one-week sessions that take between 120 and 160 students each week. Saxophonist Don Braden serves as the camp's music director, with guest faculty including Winard Harper, Jeremy Pelt and Avery Sharpe. When students arrive, they take placement tests that determine their skill level and knowledge of theory, which determines how they are placed in a combo class with five to eight other players. In the past, students have come from as far as Iceland to the camp, after reading about it online.

Muir is proud of her faculty, not only because of their talent as players, but also for their skill at interacting with students. "I really vet them from the point of view of the way they deal with young people," she says.

Jazz in July (www.jazzinjuly.com), a two-week program for musicians as young as 15, began as the Bright Moments Concert Series at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Modeled in part after the Jazz Mobile in New York, it requires audition tapes and takes 75 to 80 participants a year. Students are grouped into ensembles of five to eight members who get extensive training in improvisation and jazz theory. Faculty members, who have included Dr. Billy Taylor, Geri Allen and Sheila Jordan, also give lectures each day that can cover any topic from their musical experiences. Thursday night of both weeks features Jazz in July all-star concerts with guest faculty, while Fridays spotlight an event called Jamsations, an all-day blowout in which all the participants perform.

Frank Newton, Jazz in July's interim director, says that the program stresses both traditional styles and individuality, to bring out the best in musicians. "To