

Do You Really Want or Need a Jazz Band?

Ronnie Rios, Harlingen High School, San Antonio, Texas

Imagine waking up on a Saturday morning, getting your beautiful, hard-working, and dedicated students on a bus, and arriving at a school or university with great facilities. Unloading, then concentrating on vibrant sounds, balance, blend and superior intonation with lots of dynamics while playing music kids will be whistling back for a lifetime . . . anything yet???

OK, now add a great lunch full of bonding with your students, and them bonding with each other, keeping them out of the malls and video arcades for a day with finally a dash of listening to an incredible artist on their instrument or Big Band that

“Burns!” LIVE!!!! If that isn’t giving kids opportunities, then please give me five tokens for a dollar.

That is what taking a jazz ensemble to any festival or performance is all about. You see, the beauty of the activity is that one can make their jazz program whatever one wants it to be. One can absolutely use the jazz ensemble as a vehicle to double the amount of music education a student can receive in a school year.

Student burn-out is not an issue. Ruining embouchures by playing jazz is not an issue. The only issue here is one person working harder and probably more hours to benefit from the fruits of labor . . . you.

JAZZ CLINIC INFORMATION :

**Mr. Ronnie Rios,
President of the Texas
Unit of the IAJE,
will present a great clinic
this summer at our TBA
2004 Convention/Clinic
featuring the Harlingen
High School Jazz Ensemble.
Make plans to attend this
very inspirational and
educational presentation.**

Ronnie Rios is a graduate of Alice High School under the direction of Bryce Taylor. He graduated Summa Cum Laude earning a Bachelor of Music Education and a Masters in Music Education from Texas A & I. He began teaching in the Kingsville ISD where his middle school and high school bands received consistent sweepstakes awards and best in class awards at various state and national festivals. The jazz ensembles received best in class and numerous “Outstanding Band of the Festival” awards. Mr. Rios has been named to the Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers four times and was named Teacher of the Year in the Harlingen CISD in 2000. He has also received the Distinguished Citizen Award by the community of Harlingen and in 1996 was named Texas Young Bandmaster of the Year.

In 1997, Ronnie Rios led the Harlingen High School Jazz Ensemble to perform at the annual International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) Convention in New York, with John Fedchock as guest artist. This marked the first time in history that a South Texas High School jazz ensemble reached this lofty height. While in New York, the jazz band also participated in a tribute to Duke Ellington’s music with Wynton Marsalis leading the Harlingen Jazz Ensemble at Lincoln Center. The clinic was part of an instructional series that was published for music educator’s nation wide. The jazz ensemble was also one of two high school jazz bands from around the world invited to perform at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago in 2003.

The Harlingen H. S. Jazz performing groups consist of the Jazz Ensemble, Jazz Band II, and several student combos. Auditions for the ensembles are held in May and August. Jazz camps are held in July and include improvisation classes, sectionals, and big band rehearsals. All jazz rehearsals are held outside the school day and to this day are not a part of the school’s curriculum. Students involved in the jazz program also participate in the marching band, concert band, and the mariachi band.