

PROVIDING RESOURCES TO IOWA'S JAZZ EDUCATORS

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What's Inside

- President's Message
- All-Iowa Middle School Jazz Band
- All-State Jazz Band Directors
- All-State Jazz Etudes
- Essentially Ellington
- DownBeat Magazine Future of Jazz
- Upcoming Dates
- Reminders

President's Message

Chris Strohmaier

Hello, and welcome to the 2025-26 school year!

My name is Chris Strohmaier and I am proud to be the President of the Jazz Educators of Iowa. As jazz season cranks up into high gear, we have already seen one successful middle school combo camp, and look forward to two more in the spring. In addition, we are excited to announce the formation of a high school combo camp taking place this spring as well. Watch your emails for more information.

We have a strong leadership core within JEI who are happy to serve you in any capacity that we can. Please don't hesitate to reach out to any one of us for assistance throughout the year.

Chris Strohmaier, President - president@jeiowa.org

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Steve Shanley, Vice-President - steve.shanley@gmail.com

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Jeff Robilliard, Treasurer - treasurer@jeiowa.org

Elizabeth Hand, Media - media@jeiowa.org

Michael Prichard, Webmaster - webmaster@jeiowa.org

I regret to announce that Michael Prichard will be stepping down as webmaster for JEI. Michael has done a great job with the maintenance and upkeep of our website. On behalf of the entire organization, I would like to extend our sincerest thanks and deepest appreciation to him for the work he has done for JEI and its members.

JEI exists to connect jazz educators, and to bridge the divide so easily created by competition. In a world that becomes more segmented by the day, jazz is a place we can all come together to create something better. It is a place where

the needs of the individual are set aside for the common good, and where the success of one group is determined by that group alone and not by another working against them. Even though much of what we do within the Iowa jazz scene is competitive, I urge you to remember why we invest so much in this great artform, and to constantly reinforce that with your students. What better lesson can we give to our students?

Good luck with your school year. I hope you have a great jazz season!

Chris Strohmaier

ALL-IOWA MIDDLE SCHOOL JAZZ BAND

Under the direction of Jeff Schafer, students will rehearse and perform on Saturday, November 15th at Coe College. The concert will be live streamed at 4:00 PM on the [Coe College Music Youtube Page](#).

We look forward to this great showcase of middle school jazz education in Iowa!

2026 All-Iowa Middle School Jazz Band Personnel

Saxophones

Ollie Cassidy
Jake Dudley
Abby Hugen
Eli Lipford
Alison Stone

Trombones

Khy Edgeton
Greta Malloy
Joseph Murry
Ian Perreault
Ben Miller

Trumpets

Henry Crawford
Emma Fasse

Rhythm

Max Krapfl-Viner, Vibraphone
Sam Banaszek, Piano

Katie Farley
Karsten Hetzel
Riley Viera

Waits Alberhasky, Bass
Landon Glew, Drum Set
Nate Robilliard, Drum Set

2026 ALL-STATE JAZZ DIRECTORS



1A/2A

Joseph Jefferson

Dr. Joseph L. Jefferson is an award-winning educator, performer, and scholar known for his versatility and leadership in music. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Music and Director of Jazz Ensembles at St. Olaf College, where he also teaches applied jazz/commercial trombone. With a strong foundation in both classical and jazz traditions, Dr. Jefferson is an accomplished soloist and chamber musician whose performances span jazz, symphonic, and commercial styles on national and international stages.

Widely recognized for his impact as a music educator, Dr. Jefferson was named one of Yamaha's "40 Under 40" in 2023 and received the Ellis Marsalis, Jr. Jazz Educator of the Year Award from the Jazz Education Network in 2022. His academic contributions include research on the Shout Band tradition and publications such as "The Art of Jazz Programming."

A testament to his pedagogical excellence, Dr. Jefferson's students and ensembles have received national and international recognition, including finalist placements in solo competitions and honorable mentions abroad. His distinguished leadership in revitalizing the jazz program at Southeast Missouri State University was recognized by Yamaha's Lean Into Change initiative for its innovative and comprehensive transformation. Most recently, under his direction, St. Olaf Jazz I was selected to perform at the 79th Annual Midwest Clinic International Band and Orchestra Conference—one of the most esteemed events in music education.

Dr. Jefferson's performance credits include collaborations with celebrated artists and ensembles such as Vanessa Williams, Sean Jones, Catherine Russell, Walter Blanding, the Cab Calloway Orchestra, the Colour of Music Orchestra, and international R&B icons Dwele and Raheem DeVaughn. He has also appeared as a featured soloist with groups including the Marshall University Jazz Ensemble, George Fox University Jazz Ensemble, and the West Virginia University

Symphony Orchestra.

A sought-after clinician and guest conductor, Dr. Jefferson has presented and performed at major conferences and festivals including the Texas Music Educators Association Convention (TMEA), Florida Music Educators Association Convention (FMEA), Oregon Music Educators Association Convention (OMEA), The International Trombone Festival, the Jazz Education Network Conference, Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, and the Reno Jazz Festival. His international teaching and performing engagements include appearances in British Overseas Territory (Bermuda), Southeast Asia (Thailand), and South America (Brazil).

He regularly serves as a clinician for Jazz at Lincoln Center and most recently was a judge for the 30th Anniversary of the Essentially Ellington Jazz Festival, one of the most prestigious high school jazz competitions in the United States.

Dedicated to music education and mentorship, Dr. Jefferson has directed all-state and honor ensembles in Arkansas, Nevada, Illinois, Missouri, Idaho, and Oregon. He has also served on the faculty of Jazz at Lincoln Center's Summer Jazz Academy and the International Trombone Festival's Youth Workshop. His excellence in teaching has earned distinctions such as the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards Distinguished Professor in the Arts, Shenandoah University's Black Alumni Network Impact Award, and the Outstanding Teaching Award at Southeast Missouri State University.



3A

Ben Markley

Ben Markley is a pianist, composer, arranger, author, educator, and leader of the Ben Markley Big Band, a daring ensemble known for their creative takes on beloved modern and contemporary jazz classics. Fresh off the heels of *Clockwise: The Music of Cedar Walton*, Markley tackles his most ambitious project yet: *Ari's Funhouse*, a big band album featuring the music of drummer Ari Hoenig, with Hoenig himself in the drum chair. The album received great critical acclaim and was selected as one of the best 4 star rated albums of 2022 by *DownBeat* magazine.

Markley is active as a composer and arranger with many big band and vocal jazz charts published through UNC Jazz Press as well as his own website. Recent arranging commissions include the Kansas City Jazz Orchestra, Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia, and Wyoming Jazz Educators All-State Jazz Band.

In 2023 Markley published *Cedar. The Life and Music of Cedar Walton* (University of North Texas Press). Markley conducted more than seventy-five interviews with friends and family members, musicians who played with or were otherwise influenced by Walton, and industry figures such as club owners. Musicians interviewed include such stars as Jimmy Heath, Benny Golson, and Ron Carter. Walton's wife Martha shared her extensive archives of photos, ephemera such as fliers and tour itineraries, and letters to inform Markley's writing which is the definite biography on Walton.

Markley's book *A Practical Approach to Improvisation - The David Hazeltine Method* was published by Jamey Aebersold Jazz in December of 2014. It documents David Hazeltine's process of creating etudes from transcriptions.

Markley is an active performer in the Denver-metropolitan area and along the front range. He currently teaches jazz piano and serves as department chair of the music department for the University of Wyoming.



4A

Rodney Whitaker

Internationally renowned bassist and Origin Records recording artist, Rodney Whitaker, currently holds the titles of Professor of Jazz Bass and Director of Jazz Studies at Michigan State University where he has built one of the leading jazz degree programs and performing faculty in the world. He is considered one of the leading performers and teachers of the jazz double bass in the United States. He is also the Artistic Director of the Michigan State University Professors of Jazz, former Artistic Advisor of Jazz @ Wharton Center, Director of Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Civic Jazz Orchestra and a former member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Whitaker received his first national recognition performing with the Harrison/Blanchard Quintet.

Building on his Detroit roots and enormous talent, Whitaker went on to earn an international

reputation as one of the world's finest jazz double bass performer. He completed seven-year tenure as bassist with Wynton Marsalis' Septet and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. He has toured the world over the last twenty-five years, collaborating and performing with legendary jazz artists such as Jimmy Heath, Eric Reed, Cyrus Chestnut, Vanessa Rubin, Kathleen Battle, Dianne Reeves, Cassandra Wilson, Diana Krall, Jon Faddis, Donald Harrison, Terence Blanchard, Rodney Jones, Wycliffe Gordon, Kenny Burrell, Bob James, Benny Golson, Regina Carter, Pat Matheny, Nicholas Payton, Jimmy Cobb, Joshua Redman, Stephon Harris, Johnny O'Neal, Marcus Belgrave, James Carter, Steve Turre, Claudio Roditi, Junko Onishi, Harry Allen, Ronnie Matthews, Chick Corea, Kenny Garrett, Kevin Mahogany, Ingrid Jensen, Barry Harris, Ron Blake, Jeff Clayton, Dana Hall, Gerald Wilson, Sean Jones, Niki Harris, Wessell Anderson, Don Vappie, Johnny O'Neal, Cedar Walton, Renee Rosnes, Randy Brecker, Rickey Woodard, Bobby Shew, Gary Smulyan, Joe LaBarbera, Randy Napoleon, Peter Martin, Nnenna Freelon, Donald Byrd, Branford Marsalis, Greg Hutchinson, Carl Allen, Herlin Riley, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Terrell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Bruce Barth, Jon Carl Hendricks, Roy Hargrove, the late greats: Dizzy Gillespie, Mulgrew Miller, Tommy Flanagan, John Lewis, Marian McPartland, Donald Walden, Joe Henderson, Hank Jones, Frank Morgan and Betty 'Bebop' Carter as well as performing with leading symphony orchestras world-wide. Whitaker has also toured internationally as a featured performer with the Roy Hargrove Quintet. In addition, he has appeared and presented master classes at the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE) conferences.

Now based in East Lansing, Whitaker continues to serve many of the talented in the state of Michigan. His legacy of teaching promises to be distinguished with former students currently performing with jazz greats such as Wynton Marsalis, Dianne Reeves, Pat Matheny, The Count Basie Orchestra and Stephon Harris.

ALL-STATE JAZZ ETUDES

ALL-STATE JAZZ ETUDES ARE LIVE!

Directors must be current on their JEI membership by December 20th to receive the registration discount.

NOTE: There is a slight change to the guitar etude for this year. Guitar players should rest for the first four bars of the etude and begin playing in measure 5.

This change is noted on the pdf.

All submissions are due at 11:59 pm on Saturday, February 28.

AUDITION INFORMATION

AUDITION ETUDES

DIRECTIONS FOR SUBMITTING

AUDITION RECORDINGS

ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON

Looking to get your hands on some free music?

Check out Essentially Ellington!

Launched in 1995, Essentially Ellington is a free program for high school jazz bands that aims to elevate musicianship, broaden perspectives, and inspire performance. Any high school or college-aged jazz ensemble can join the Essentially Ellington network free of charge. Members receive free printed or instant downloads of nine big band charts along with free rehearsal guides for directors.

Visit the [Jazz @ Lincoln Center Essentially Ellington](#) page for more information.

DOWNBEAT FUTURE OF JAZZ

Looking for a way to keep your students up to date with the latest in jazz performance?

Then sign up for [DownBeat Magazine's Future of Jazz Program](#).

Registered schools receive up to 25 free print or digital copies of DownBeat magazine each month from October through June totally free of charge. Don't miss out on this free

opportunity to introduce your students to what's happening right now in the world of jazz.

UPCOMING DATES

December 20, 2025

JEI Membership Discount Deadline

(Sign up by this date to receive your All-State Jazz submission discount)

February 28, 2026

All-State Instrumental Jazz Auditions Due

April 24, 2026

NEIBA Combo Day (Middle and High School)

May 13-14, 2026

Iowa All-State Jazz Band Rehearsals, Johnston High School

May 14, 2026

Iowa All-State Jazz Band Performance, Downtown Marriott

REMINDERS

Invite Your Friends To Become Members of JEI!

QUICK LINKS

[Past Newsletters](#)

[Clinicians](#)

[Resources](#)



Stay up-to-date with current activities and future events by following us on your favorite social media channels.



Contact Us

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