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6 students to travel to Indianapolis May 20-24 to perform, teach jazz

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Posted: Sunday, May 19, 2013 1:57 pm | Updated: 2:10 pm, Sun May 19, 2013.

Submitted

Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts was one of two schools nationwide selected by the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz to participate in a national "Peer-to-Peer Education" tour. With lead funding from the National Endowment of the Arts, six exceptionally gifted music students from HSPVA will present "jazz informances" in Indianapolis public schools May 20-24.

Combining performance with information, the sextet will perform with internationally acclaimed jazz saxophonist and Grammy nominee Antonio Hart, vocal sensation and former winner of the Thelonious Monk Institute International Jazz Vocals Competition Lisa Henry and renowned jazz educator Dr. J.B. Dyas.



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Each school visit will include an assembly program featuring a musical performance for all students, followed by jazz workshops for each school's jazz band and choir with the visiting student performers playing alongside and sharing ideas with their Indianapolis counterparts. National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master David Baker, an Indianapolis native and graduate of Crispus Attucks High School, will join the musicians for a special performance at his alma mater May 22.

"As young people are so influenced by kids their own age, who better to expose them to this great American art form than those of their own generation?" said Thelonious Monk Jr., chairman of the institute's Board of Trustees and son of legendary jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk. "And when you hear how great these young kids play, you know the future of our music is in



good hands."

Besides playing jazz at a level that belies their years, the students will talk with their Indianapolis peers about what jazz is, why it's important to America and how a jazz ensemble represents a perfect democracy.

They also will discuss important American values that jazz represents: teamwork, freedom with responsibility, unity with ethnic diversity, the correlation of hard work and goal accomplishment, the importance of finding a passion early in life, being persistent and believing in yourself. When young people hear this important message from kids their same age, they are more likely to listen.

The six Houston students selected to participate in the Indianapolis tour include drummer Jalon Archie, 18; trumpeter Adam DeWalt, 18; guitarist Jeremy Dorsey, 17; pianist James Francies, 17; bassist John Koozin, 17; and saxophonist Jyron Walls, 18.

"The group has grown so much from learning Antonio Hart's music," said Warren Sneed, HSPVA's director of jazz studies and one of the top tenor saxophonists in Houston. "It covers the full gamut: blues, swing, bebop and modern."



Immediately following the informances, Hart, Henry and Dyas will conduct jazz workshops for each host school's jazz band and choir in which the visiting students will play with their Indianapolis counterparts side-by-side, providing tutelage peer to peer.

In so doing, they will teach and learn from one another not unlike Thelonious Monk did with his fellow musicians during the bebop era some 70 years ago. They'll also learn about each other's cities and culture.

"The best part will be hanging out and playing jazz with kids our own age from Indianapolis," said Francies, a member of the 2013 National GRAMMY High School Jazz Ensemble. "We know that Indianapolis, especially Indianapolis Avenue, is so important in the history of jazz."

Indeed, such jazz luminaries as David Baker, Slide Hampton, Freddie Hubbard, J.J. Johnson and Wes Montgomery hail from the Circle City.

The weeklong tour will conclude with a concert open to the public May 24 at the world famous Jazz Kitchen, 5377 N. College Ave., where Indianapolis residents and visitors are invited to enjoy an evening of music with Hart and Henry alongside jazz's future "young lions."

The octet will perform standards, jazz classics and contemporary jazz, including compositions from Hart's and Henry's latest CD releases. Shows begin at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. For information, visit www.thejazzkitchen.com or call 317-253-4900.



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