



Summer 2008

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Recommended Citation

Benner, Amelia (2008) "Alumni make music together as Chicago-area jazz ensemble," *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine, 2002-2017*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwumag/vol17/iss2/8>

This is a PDF version of an article that originally appeared in the printed Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine, a quarterly periodical published by Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact iwumag@iwu.edu.

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Alumni make music together as Chicago-area jazz ensemble

Story by AMELIA BENNER '09

When Brett Dean '03 and some of his fellow School of Music alumni began to miss the musical camaraderie of Wesleyan, they decided to — forgive the puns — band together and toot their own horns.

“Many of us have found it difficult to find a ‘music scene’ to perform in after graduation,” he says. “We decided to take the bull by the horns and form a musical organization ourselves.”

Eleven out of the 19 members of the jazz ensemble Shout Section are Wesleyan graduates, and many are also music teachers. The group rehearses twice weekly and performs year-round across the Chicago area.

The inspiration for the group came when Brett took a job teaching music in St. Charles, Ill., after earning his master’s degree from Butler University in Indianapolis. He found that many IWU music graduates were also living and working in the Chicago area.

“We started talking about how important performing is in our lives and how difficult it can be to find quality performance opportunities throughout the year after leaving a collegiate environment,” Brett says.

Because most of the graduates were teachers, they decided to start a jazz band that emphasized jazz education.

“At some point after high school or college, many people give up playing music and listening to jazz or classic styles,” Brett says. “We wanted to show our students that performing is fun at any age, and that there are groups to perform in after high school or college. We hope to address the disconnect at least a little bit by performing exciting music and illustrating how much fun it is to be on stage.”

Shout Section’s goal, Brett says, is to create a place for music majors to continue to perform after leaving college, while also improving their teaching skills and providing inspiration to their students.

“We recognize that this is a unique ensemble that allows us to improve as teachers and performers simultaneously,” Brett says.

Brett invites other Wesleyan music alums in the Chicagoland area who might be interested in joining the group to contact him. Shout Section is also available to perform at schools, weddings and other events.



Alumni members of Shout Section are, from left in the front row: Brett Dean '03, Amy Plazek '06, Katrina Stansbury '07, Jessica Ryan '03 and Katie Pilson '02. In the back row, from left, are: Brian Baxter '07, David Maday '01 (fifth from left), Becca Rodey '05 (eighth from left), Kevin Van Prooyen '00, David Hartley '05 and Josh Biere '07.