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High School and Junior High Jazz Bands Perform at Illinois Wesleyan University Jazz Festival

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The recently performed at Illinois Wesleyan University for the 28th Annual Illinois Wesleyan University Jazz Festival. The event took place on January 18 and showcased 30 junior high and high school bands from throughout Illinois.

Since its inception in 1976, the goal of this event has been to encourage junior high and high school ensembles to upgrade their level of jazz performance by participating in a noncompetitive festival. This year, each band had the opportunity to play in front of a panel of adjudicators including: Ron Carter, director of jazz studies at Northern Illinois University; Steve Wiest, director of jazz studies at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater; Rob Parton, director of jazz studies at Roosevelt University and leader of the Rob Parton Big Band; Tom Birkner, director of bands at Belleville West High School; and Jim Warrick, director of bands at New Trier High School, Winnetka, Ill.

The panel provided each ensemble with feedback on their performance and ways to enhance their playing as a whole. After the ensembles played on stage they had the opportunity to work one-on-one with an adjudicator to help isolate concerns and to improve the ensemble's awareness of jazz style.

Attendees of the festival also had the opportunity to attend instrumental clinic sessions run by each of the adjudicators. "The most important aspect of the festival is the clinic sessions that are run by the some of the best jazz educators in the Midwest," said Thomas Streeter,

festival director and professor of brass instruments and theory at Illinois Wesleyan. “Students get to sit at the feet of these jazz masters in the separate clinics to learn more about their instruments and playing jazz, which will assist the students’ overall musical abilities.”

The event included an afternoon concert by the Illinois Wesleyan University Jazz Ensemble under the direction of Streeter. The band featured guest artist pianist, Shelton Berg. Berg, who has composed music for film and television, is currently the chair of jazz studies in the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California.