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Annual Jazz Festival to Feature Grammy-Nominated Performer

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The 36th annual Illinois Wesleyan Jazz Festival will feature a performance by Grammy-nominated composer Steve Wiest, who was a featured performer and arranger for the Maynard Ferguson Band. He will perform with the IWU Jazz Ensemble on Saturday, Jan. 22 at 12:45 p.m. in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall (1210 Park St., Bloomington).

While the festival is designed as a daylong, non-competitive clinic for students of jazz, the public is welcome to the free performance at 12:45 p.m.

The director of world-famous One O’Clock Lab Band, Wiest, has toured extensively in the United States, South America, Australia, Japan and Europe. He has released several solo CDs, including 2008’s *Out of The New* and 2006’s *Excalibur: The Steve Wiest Big Band*. While with the Maynard Ferguson Band, he performed with such talents as Freddie Hubbard, Slide Hampton, Wynton Marsalis, David Clayton Thomas, Lew Soloff, Billy Eckstein and Mel Torme. Wiest was also nominated for the Best Instrumental Arrangement Grammy Award in 2007 by The Recording Academy for his arrangement of “Besame Mucho” on Maynard Ferguson’s *One and Only* CD. He is currently an associate professor in the Jazz Studies Division of the College of Music at the University of North Texas.



Steve Wiest

The IWU Jazz Festival started in 1976 to encourage junior high and high school ensembles to participate in a non-competitive festival. It includes clinics, known as “master classes,” taught by noted jazz educators and performers from around the country. Wiest will give the free, public performance with the Jazz Ensemble after a morning of working with students in master classes.

“The jazz world is not that big, so it’s pretty well known who will work well with a jazz festival such as this one,” said Professor of Music Tom Streeter, who founded the festival as a way to encourage young players. Streeter noted the musicians brought in to work with students have to have something more than pure talent. “Those doing the master classes have to be a player and an educator. It has to be someone who is willing to share their ideas with other people.”

Streeter said in the beginning many people discouraged him from trying to form a non-competitive festival, saying there would be little interest. “I wanted this to be an event where students could come without pressure, or feeling brow-beaten to excel,” said Streeter. “It was designed to be a chance for students to really learn from professionals.”

This year’s festival is part of the 40th anniversary of the Jazz Program at Illinois Wesleyan. Events have been ongoing through the 2010-2011 academic year to honor the program, as well as Professor Streeter, who founded the Jazz Program in 1971 and plans to retire at the end of the academic year.

Other activities throughout the year will help celebrate the program and Streeter’s love of jazz, especially trombone music: an extended tour of the IWU Jazz Ensemble in New York City and Boston in March, and a performance by Charles Vernon of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and a special all-trombone concert – including as many as 75 trombone-playing alumni – in April.

For further information on the anniversary celebration, contact the Illinois Wesleyan School of Music at (309) 556-3061.

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