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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jazz festival showcases middle and high school bands during competition
Wesleyan joins arts council to inspire young musicians

FORT WORTH, April 22 – For the fifth consecutive year, Texas Wesleyan University has teamed up with the Arts Council of Fort Worth and Tarrant County to increase the quality of life and education through the Neighborhood Arts Program, which aims to bring “flourishing and culturally rich arts programs” into Fort Worth. As part of the partnership, middle and high school bands throughout North Texas will compete in public performances during the two-day Wesleyan Invitational Jazz Festival, Saturday, May 1 and Sunday, May 2. The festival will be held at its historic Southeast campus in Nicholas Martin Hall at 1201 Wesleyan St. in the Ann Waggoner Annex Building.

According to Tim Ishii, Texas Wesleyan’s department of music chair and director of the Wesleyan Jazz Ensemble, the festival provides up-and-coming middle and high school-aged musicians with the chance to learn from professionals, and it offers the community the chance to experience high-quality musical performances, locally and affordably.

The Invitational Jazz Festival is a combination of jazz concerts and competitions. The

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middle and high school band competition, the Highlander Jazz Festival, is funded in part by a grant provided by the arts council. . Other sponsors include Johnny Paul’s Music Shop, Rivard Brothers Band Instrument Specialists, JW Pepper Music and Cannonball Musical Instruments. Sixteen bands will participate in the Highlander competition on Saturday: Arlington High; Brewer High of White Settlement; Cedar Hill High; Frisco High; Krum High; James Bowie High of Arlington; James Martin High of Arlington (first and second bands); O. D. Wyatt High of Fort Worth; Red Oak High; R. L. Paschal High of Fort Worth (first and second bands); Sherman High; West Mesquite High; Wichita Falls High and Zundy Junior High of Wichita Falls.

Bands compete with 30-minute, prepared performances, which begin at approximately 8 a.m. and continue throughout the day on Saturday. These performances are free and open to the public. At 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, the participants will attend the awards ceremony and evening concert. The concert features the winner of the competition, the Wesleyan Jazz Ensemble, and internationally acclaimed guest artists Scott Harrell, trumpet player, and trombonist Ron Wilkins, who will work with the students in a hands-on jazz clinic during the festival.

Harrell is currently involved with Broadway musicals including *Cats*, *The Producers* and *Wonderful Town*. He is best known for his performances with the UNT One ‘o’clock lab band, having recorded five albums with them from 1992 to 1995. Wilkins has performed with jazz legends Jerry Lewis, Rosemary Clooney, Dizzy Gillespie, the Temptations and other well-known artists such as Bob Hope. He is an Edwards Trombones clinician and recently released his first CD, “Ron Wilkins: A Tribute to the Masters.”

The jazz festival continues on Sunday night at 7:30 p.m., beginning with a performance

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by Fort Worth’s Morningside Middle School Band, under the direction of Claude Parker, Fort Worth’s Eastern Hills High School Band, under the direction of Kathy Bernal, and guest artists Scott Harrell and Ron Wilkins.

Amanda Dickson, a sophomore at Texas Wesleyan University and a member of the Wesleyan Jazz Ensemble, says the festival is good for the community and the students who are involved. Dickson has an insider’s view of the festival’s benefit, not only as a representative of Texas Wesleyan, but also from a teacher’s perspective. Dickson teaches private music lessons to Eastern Hills High School band students every Tuesday and Thursday and experiences how the program affects them before, during and after the festival.

“Working with the music students is fun. (Eastern Hills) is not a wealthy school, but the kids that are there really want to play. Seeing them excited about it makes it worth it,” says Dickson. “This program really means a lot to them.”

The competition concerts are free and open to the public. Both evening performances can be purchased for \$5 a seat. To purchase tickets or obtain further information about the Wesleyan Invitation Jazz Festival, contact the department of music at (817) 531-4992.

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