

Jazz program in spotlight at state conference

by Sheryl Hanson - Friday, November 09, 2007

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UW Oshkosh's jazz program enjoyed the spotlight at this year's Wisconsin Music Educators' Conference Oct. 25-26 at the Monona Terrace, Madison.

Conference chair was UW Oshkosh's Kenneth Liske, professor of music education. Before lunch on Oct. 25, hundreds of attendees enjoyed the UW Oshkosh Jazz Ensemble, directed by Marty Robinson. Tenor and soprano saxophone artist Tom Washatka, '82, was the featured alumni guest artist.

After the jazz performance, nearly 100 UW Oshkosh alumni, students, faculty and friends enjoyed a reception sponsored by J. W. Pepper.

On Friday, alumnus Randy Pagel, '89, principal at Clark County School District in Las Vegas, NV, presented a session. He received the UW Oshkosh Outstanding Young Alumni award in 1999.

Robinson is an associate professor of trumpet and jazz at UW Oshkosh. He served 10 years at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, where he was recognized as Teacher of the Year in 2001. He released a jazz trumpet CD, "Standards - Vol. 1," and is also active as a jazz pianist and clinician.

A composer across musical spectrums, Robinson has written music for the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, a concerto for bass and orchestra, and several works for wind ensemble, choral ensembles, symphony orchestra and various chamber ensembles. He also is composer and trumpeter on music used for HBO's *The Sopranos*, ABC's *20/20*, Fox's *NFL Films*, PBS's *National Geographic* and CBS's *U.S. Open Tennis Coverage*, as well as national campaigns for NBC's *ER*, Hershey's *Chocolate*, *ADT Security*, *Gillette* and *Burger King*.

Washatka, who earned a bachelor's degree in music from UW Oshkosh, studied saxophone, clarinet and flute as a student. Later he studied saxophone with Berkley Fudge at the Conservatory of Music in Milwaukee and Joe Daly at the University of Chicago, and improvisation with composer/pianist John Harmon. In 2004, he was nominated for the Wisconsin Area Music Industry's producer of the year award. Washatka teaches jazz saxophone and improvisation at Lawrence University Conservatory of Music in Appleton. He is married to jazz vocalist Janet Planet, who has a large fan base in the Oshkosh area.

The UW Oshkosh jazz program, begun in the mid-1970s, boasts two big bands, a vocal jazz choir and several jazz small groups. Regular late night jam sessions in Reeve Memorial Union and weekly on-campus coffee house gigs have become staples of UW Oshkosh life.

For more information about the UW Oshkosh Music Department, call (920) 424-4224.