

Lafayette Summer Music Jazz Workshop Continues to Amaze

By Lee Borrowman



The Alex Murzyn Combo takes a turn on stage

Last Friday evening families and friends of students participating in Bob Athayde's Summer Music Jazz Workshop were treated to a closing concert featuring twenty three student combo bands led by Workshop instructors and culminating in instructor performances that brought the house down. The area surrounding the Multi-Purpose Room at Stanley Middle School was reminiscent of a major concert or jazz festival; catering trucks lined the parking lot and volunteer staffers scurried here and there in the flawless execution of a well-scripted production.

Finishing its ninth year, the Summer Music Jazz Workshop draws students and teachers not only from Lamorinda but from all over Northern California. The venue, overflowing with performers and audience members, vibrated with youthful energy. Twelve year old trumpet player Molly Pines

(pictured, center) spoke highly of the Music Theory and Masters trumpet classes, but says her favorite part of the Workshop was, "the free period jam sessions. Groups of students and instructors would just get together and play." When her turn to perform ended, Molly practically floated off the stage to receive hugs and congratulations from her family, including mom Randi Pines, a Generations in Jazz board member; the faces of mother and daughter were wreathed in smiles.

The instructors appeared to be having nearly as much fun as the students. While listening from the sidelines, piano teachers Jon Palacio and Frank Sumares both said they are proud to be part of the program. Sumares enthused, "I've been teaching at the workshop since it began, and it's a real pleasure to watch the growth and improvement of the students. There's so much great positive energy here." A father of three girls, Sumares also appreciates the gender diversity in the program: "Who says girls can only play flute and violin? Here we've got lady saxophone teachers and girl drummers!" Palacio, teaching at the Workshop for his third year, says the small class sizes offer great opportunities for instructors to really focus on individual students, and the instructors enjoy being around each other. "We're all here for the same reason, and we're all on the same wavelength. I've taught at other music camps, and this is probably the best jazz camp there is."

The Summer Music Jazz Workshop would not be possible without the support of the community, including LASF, Generations in Jazz, the Julia Burke Foundation and too many more to list. For more information, go to www.laf-smw.org.

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