



# JAZZ ARTS GROUP HISTORY

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The Jazz Arts Group's mission - *to advance and celebrate the art of jazz through performance and education* - continues to drive the evolution of the organization on a daily basis.

The Jazz Arts Group of Columbus (JAG) began in 1973 as a vehicle for local professional musicians to present high-level performances to audiences in a big-band jazz setting. Founded at Capital University by Ray Eubanks, a professor at the institution and a professional musician, JAG organized using the model of a non-profit performing arts organization, a unique concept at the time. The ensemble met with early success, and in 1978 began a long run at Battelle Hall as their artistic home. Over the next eighteen years at that venue, JAG created a huge following, presenting the finest jazz artists in the world. During this period, JAG also established a practice of providing jazz education to local schools in a small ensemble setting.

In 1996, after two European tours funded by the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC), the ensemble's name was changed to the Columbus Jazz Orchestra (CJO), to better differentiate the identity of the ensemble and that of Jazz Arts Group as the "umbrella" organization. At that time, it was also announced that the CJO would become the major performing ensemble at the restored Southern Theatre, to be reopened in 1998.

In 2002, JAG founder Ray Eubanks retired and the organization's leadership transitioned to Robert Breithaupt, as Executive Director of JAG, and Byron Stripling, as Artistic Director of the CJO. In a reflection of trends in audiences and community value toward the arts, an effort was undertaken to broaden JAG's impact on the local and national level and to leverage the international reputation of its artistic leadership.

JAG is the third largest performing arts organization in Columbus, the second largest of its type in the United States, and the only jazz organization to receive major institutional support by the Ohio Arts Council, and has been the recipient of the GCAC Artistic Excellence Award on two occasions. The CJO is considered to be one of the world's finest jazz orchestras, and is noted for the community impact of its educational programs and the unique Jazz Academy, a one-of-a-kind facility at the Lincoln Theatre dedicated to instruction in America's music for multigenerational participants. Students touched by JAG's education program have become noted artists and educators throughout the nation.

Today, JAG stands as a collaborator, thought-leader and artistic guidepost for the community and beyond with its work with local organizations such as BalletMet, CCAD, WOSU Public Media, the Columbus Gay Men's Chorus, the King Arts Complex, COSI, and Thurber House. Partnerships with community organizations like the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, YMCA, AddOhio, the Urban League, the Columbus Museum of Art, Experience Columbus, the Godman Guild, the Salvation Army, and the Mid-Ohio Foodbank provide for creative interaction and civic benefit.

JAG receives support from and collaborates with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Arts Midwest, the Ohio Department of Education, the Jazz Education Network (JEN), the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM), the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Reinberger Foundation, and numerous others. Launched in 2009, JAG was the lead organization for the Jazz Audiences Initiative, a groundbreaking study of jazz audiences, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF). In 2011, DDCF recognized Jazz Arts Group as a Continuing Innovation Grant honoree to carry on with the next phase of this important research. JAG was also honored with the 2011 Columbus Foundation Award, as the central Ohio non-profit organization of the year.