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## OAKTOWN JAZZ WORKSHOPS

Based in Oakland and formed in 1994, [Oaktown Jazz Workshops](#) (OJW) celebrates jazz music as an American indigenous art form of profound artistic and cultural significance. A complex and enjoyable music as well as an important indicator of American history, jazz offers a rich legacy that has touched the lives of each generation and continues to be an important component of contemporary culture. OJW's mission is to promote, preserve, and present this music so that all youth, and especially African American youth, develop a sense of ownership and pride in jazz music as a uniquely American cultural tradition.



Khalil Shaheed is OJW's Founder/Director & Artistic Director. OJW's approach to pedagogy is somewhat unique in that the organization employs four teachers for each workshop, one person from each discipline or group of instruments. The students not only learn firsthand about music, but they also get a chance to hear some of the history of the music from professionals who are playing it as this music was originally passed on orally. The goal of OJW is to provide young musicians with focused opportunities to develop a new or deeper relationship with this rich medium of expression; both as skilled performers and as informed and involved listeners.



OJW's original program creates a safe, structured environment in which young people with different levels of musical experience are able to come and be a part of a creative jazz ensemble under the guidance of professional master musicians. To preserve this music, a community of teachers, mentors, and storytellers was established. Students are challenged to improve on their skills in a collaborative, creative safe environment. The skills and discipline learned there can be used in other area the student chooses to pursue, even if they don't become professional musicians.

OJW has grown and evolved over the 16 years since it was established. Examples of the organization's current programs and productions include:

***The Groovemobile:*** The Groovemobile travels throughout the Bay Area bringing free concerts to neighborhood parks showcasing local, national, and international talent in the jazz and world music genres. It has been an icon of the area's music scene for many years.

***Art and Soul Festival:*** For the past 10 years, Khalil Shaheed and the OJW have produced the Jazz Stage at the Art and Soul Festival in Downtown Oakland. This year's artists included Oakland's own MC Hammer, Tower of Power,

and others. Festival draws around 100,000 per weekend, and has served as a tourist destination for the East Bay.

***Portfest:*** World music and jazz festival held in beautiful Middle Harbor Shoreline Park. For three years OJW produced an incident-free Portfest, where thousands of people have enjoyed the music of Kenny Garret, Pharoah Sanders, Ledisi, Mo'Rockin Project, and Hugh Masekela to name a few. Portfest, organized by Shaheed, is a partnership between the Port of Oakland and the East Bay Regional Park District.



***Saturday Night Fish Fry:*** Historic event in historic location. The wonderful Sweets Ballroom provided the location for an actual fish fry and dance concert. This venue has in the past hosted greats like Count Basie, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, and others. Groups like the Elvin Bishop Group, and Sugar Pie De Santo, and the Big Belly Blues Band have played in this incarnation of the down-home fish fry.

***Oakland School for the Arts Residency:*** OJW's programs rely on presentation as well as education to keep the music alive and vibrant. One program they are very proud of is the Artist in Residence program at Oakland School for the Arts (OSA), which is funded by the California Arts Council. This residency allows a newly formed school for the arts to have an advanced jazz program that makes it competitive in Bay Area youth jazz education. Khalil Shaheed and

Saxophonist Dayna Stevens work twice weekly with the OSA Jazz Combo to prepare students for concerts and competition at the state level, as well as for college auditions. They also are working on recording a CD featuring the Jazz Combo's work. In addition, visiting jazz legends conduct workshops for the OSA students - providing them a firsthand look at jazz, from maestros who have turned their love of the music into a career.



The OJW is a vital component of the East Bay and regional jazz community. It has provided leadership and training through arts education in schools and nurturing of young talents in neighborhoods. Its roots are deep in the cultural soil that nourishes the arts. The organization's activities have had profound impact on the coming generations of youthful jazz musicians in the Bay Area. The California Arts Council is proud to have this organization as part of the Artists in Schools Program.

Photo subjects and credits (in order presented): *Savannah Harris on drums by Joe Thornton; Khalil teaching Sade Kammen (sax) by Joe Thornton; Khalil with Toumani Band by Sam Dickie; Khalil and various students by E&B Photography.*

Oaktown Jazz Workshops receives funding from the California Arts Council's [Artists in Schools Program](#), which supports residencies in schools, and is managed by Wayne Cook [wcook@cac.ca.gov](mailto:wcook@cac.ca.gov).

