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**Berkeley High Jazz Alumni Concert Honors Dr. Herb Wong June 1st**

[Berkeley, CA] Berkeley High Jazz Program alumni will honor the late Dr. Herb Wong, father of Berkeley School Jazz Programs, at the 3rd Annual Berkeley High School Jazz Alumni Concert on June 1st. Some of their finest musicians, spanning decades of Berkeley High Jazz, will celebrate his life.

The concert will be held on Sunday June 1st from 2-5PM at the beautiful Coventry Grove, a private outdoor performance space in Kensington. Music director for the Berkeley High Jazz Alumni All-Stars will be Charles Hamilton, who helmed the storied BHS Jazz program from 1981 through 2009.

While the final lineup for the Alumni All-Stars is still shaping up, performers include multi-instrumentalist Peter Apfelbaum, saxophonists Bennett Friedman and Hitomi Oba, bassoonist Paul Hanson, percussionist Josh Jones, trombonist Sarah Cline, and surprise guests. The event benefits the Berkeley High Jazz Program. In addition, current Berkeley High advanced combos, one just back from performing at the Monterey Jazz Festival, will perform sets with guest alumni sitting in.

A posthumous award will be presented from the City of Berkeley, honoring Dr. Wong’s inspiration to generations of Berkeley jazz musicians. An accomplished jazz journalist, historian, critic, recording artist, and concert producer, Dr. Wong may be best beloved as a founding father of the Berkeley Schools Jazz program. Dr. Wong was the visionary principal of Washington Elementary School who hired Phil Hardymon, Dick Wittington and Bob Chacona to teach jazz to Berkeley Unified School District kids in the late 1960s. “He was one of a very few people in the nation then who believed in jazz education from the elementary school level,” commented current Berkeley High Jazz Program Director Sarah Cline, “-- as music education, as a part of the civil rights movement, and as a way of propagating a truly democratic and artistic spirit among those of us in the next generation.”

All ages are welcome. Tickets are $20 at the door or through BerkeleyHighJazz.org and Eventbrite.com. Advance tickets are recommended.

Doors open at 1PM. Carpooling is encouraged. Allow time to park and walk. “No Parking” signs are strictly enforced. ##

High resolution images available upon request.

More info about the Berkeley High School Jazz program at www.berkeleyhighjazz.org

More info about Dr. Herb Wong available HERE, http://www.bhsjazz.org/bhj-history/about-dr-herb-wong/

Event info here, http://www.bhsjazz.org/event/bhs-jazz-alumni-concert/

**Dr. HERB WONG**

March, 18, 1926 - April 20, 2014

Berkeley Unified School District’s jazz program lost one of its founding fathers when Dr. Herb Wong passed away April 20th, 2014 at the age of 88. BHS Jazz has been preparing to honor Dr. Wong at our annual alumni concert on June 1st, along with a presentation of a City of Berkeley Proclamation in his name. Sadly this will now be presented posthumously.

Dr. Wong was the visionary principal of Washington Elementary School responsible for hiring Phil Hardymon, Dick Whittington, Bob Chacona and others to teach jazz, back in the late 1960s, at a time when few people in the nation believed in jazz education at the elementary school level. In the words of current BHS Jazz Director Sarah Cline, herself a BHS alum: “This vision gave so many of us the opportunity to learn about jazz, fall in love with the music, and become the artists and people that we are today. Scores of professional jazz artists are alumni of the program Dr. Wong started, nurtured, believed in, and stumped for.”

Raised in Oakland and Stockton, Wong served in World War II before pursuing his twin passions of jazz and science. Though he had a master’s degree from San Jose State University and a doctorate from UC Berkeley in zoology, Wong was not content just to be a leader in revamping science education in the post-Sputnik era: he nurtured his lifelong passion for jazz as a KJAZ host for almost four decades, and as a writer who contributed hundreds of liner notes as well as articles for Down Beat and Jazz Educators Journal. As a teacher and later an administrator in Oakland and Berkeley schools, he was an innovator who recruited hardworking colleagues willing to break out of conventional molds and cross boundaries, to challenge themselves and their students.

His work as a DJ and as a judge at school music competitions positioned him to identify the qualities of musical commitment beyond mere technical excellence, and his acumen as a critic and producer led to successful pioneering collaborations between performers and teachers. His intuition as an administrator guided him to spot talented musicians who would become top-flight music educators, and he tirelessly worked to augment his faculty and steer the curriculum at Washington Elementary, then a Laboratory School for the University of California.

Dr. Wong’s friendship with Oscar Peterson led to an unprecedented 1965 visit to Washington Elementary’s auditorium, where the group played for two assemblies. Each thoughtfully integrated into Wong’s program of curriculum enrichment, culminating with the trio taking suggested notes from the kids and “co-composing” a tune to be improvised and fleshed out on the spot. In the years that followed, Berkeley schools saw visits from Rahsaan Roland Kirk and his quintet, Vi Redd, Phil Woods, Duke Ellington and others, experiences cited by future professional jazz players as key moments of inspiration.

In Sarah Cline’s words: “Another giant has fallen. Continuing to carry out Dr. Wong’s vision falls to those of us who remain.” ##