The 30th Annual Vail Jazz Workshop

The 2025 Vail Jazz Workshop will take place in Vail, CO from **Aug 23 – Aug 31**

Workshop Applications Open on January 13, 2025

VailJazz.org/education/vj-workshop

Greetings From Vail Jazz!

Whether you're an educator, student, musician or journalist, we're pleased to introduce you to the annual Vail Jazz Workshop, founded in 1996. With world-renowned bassist John Clayton at its helm since its inception, the Vail Jazz Workshop was singled out by DownBeat magazine in 2019 as the leading workshop in the USA, and the accolades just keep coming.

The following materials describe our program and the team that leads it. If we can answer any questions about the Workshop, please don't hesitate to contact us. We love touting Vail Jazz, it's Workshop alumni, and the countless advantages this training program offers to the jazz stars of tomorrow!



What Makes Us Different

What is it that makes the Vail Jazz Workshop different? So many things! Compared to most other jazz workshops, Vail's – 30 years in operation – is small and personal, yet highly competitive. Only 12 students are accepted each year – two each for saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, bass, and drums. They're mentored throughout the 9-day Workshop by six world-class musicians and educators. The pedagogy is focused on playing by ear, not sight, freeing the students to master the music, innovate, and develop their own instrumental voice and see how it fits into the musical conversations taking place on stage. Through intense preparation and collaboration, they learn the essence of musicianship. During the legendary Vail Jazz Festival, the Workshop students network and perform with Workshop alumni and other renowned jazz luminaries, forming relationships that last a lifetime. And all this takes place in an incomparably gorgeous setting in the Rocky Mountains of Vail, Colorado. It's no wonder that the Vail Jazz Workshop is one of the most highly regarded and respected jazz education programs in the nation!



Meet the Workshop Team

“We should never forget we once were where these kids now are. I say to the students, ‘We’re helping you because someone once helped us, and somewhere down the line you’re going to help somebody.’”
-John Clayton, Workshop Education Director and Bass Instructor



John has directed the Workshop since its inception in 1996, and has been a major creative and educational force for the more than 300 Workshop graduates. The Grammy winner and eight-time Grammy nominee is a devoted educator and currently serves as President of the International Bassists Society; Artistic Director of the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, the Sarasota Jazz Festival, and the Centrum Jazz Workshop; and teaches at USC’s Thornton School of Music. John is further supporting Vail Jazz, since founder Howard Stone’s passing, in the role of Artistic Director.

Meet the Workshop Team

Bill Cunliffe - Workshop Piano Instructor



Pianist, composer, and Grammy Award-winning arranger Bill Cunliffe is known for his innovative and swinging jazz compositions. He is the recipient of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Award as well as multiple Grammy and Emmy nominations. Bill is Professor of Music at California State University Fullerton, where he has been honored as Distinguished Faculty Member; he has also taught at
numerous schools, workshops and clinics including the Skidmore Jazz Institute and Temple University.

Meet the Workshop Team

Wycliffe Gordon - Workshop Trombone Instructor



Wycliffe is one of the nation's foremost jazz educators, having held positions at The Juilliard School of Music, Michigan State University, and Manhattan School of Music; he is currently Director of Jazz Studies at Augusta University. Wycliffe has had a remarkable career, including membership in the Wynton Marsalis Septet and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. He is a sought-after teacher, clinican, and conductor at festivals and educational facilities throughout the country.

Meet the Workshop Team

Lewis Nash - Workshop Drums Instructor



Named “Jazz’s Most Valuable Player” by Modern Drummer Magazine, Lewis has one of the longest discographies in jazz. He has performed or recorded with jazz immortals including Oscar Peterson, JJ Johnson, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Betty Carter, Ron Carter, Wynton and Branford Marsalis and many more. The founder of the Phoenix nonprofit education and performance center, The Nash, Lewis serves on the faculty of Arizona State University; in 2021 the Lewis Nash Scholarship, awarded to a deserving ASU jazz performance student, was endowed in his name.

Meet the Workshop Team

Tim Green - Workshop Saxophone Instructor



Whether leading his own dynamic bands, supplying the soul for ensembles across the musical spectrum, embodying the spirit of modern jazz and the spiritual sounds, or inspiring the next generation of musicians, Grammy-nominated saxophonist, composer, arranger, educator and Vail Jazz Workshop alumni Tim Green is a wide-ranging artist of deep passion and unflagging individuality. Green has performed and recorded with some of the most recognized names in jazz and is on the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory.

Meet the Workshop Team

Terell Stafford - Workshop Trumpet Instructor



Grammy Award-winner and five-time Grammy nominee, Terell has performed with numerous stellar jazz groups over the years. He is the Director of Jazz Studies and Chair of Instrumental Studies at Temple University, the founder and band leader of the Terell Stafford Quintet, the Managing and Artistic Director of the Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia, and a soloist in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra since 2005. Terell has also conducted workshops and clinics with the Monk Institute, Juilliard Jazz Seminar, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and the Stanford Jazz Workshop, among others.

Our Alumni

Over the past 30 years, the Vail Jazz Workshop has helped launch the careers of many of today's leading musicians and educators. Among the 300+ Vail Jazz Workshop alumni are sought-after recording and performance artists, band leaders, composers, and educators, many of whom have been recognized with Grammy and other prestigious awards and nominations, not only in jazz but in other musical genres, such as symphony, pop, and hip-hop. Vail Jazz keeps up with our alumni and promotes their gigs and achievements in our regular Alumni Happenings posts at VailJazz.org/news.

