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Tuesday,
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BRASS BAND BENEFACTOR

Japanese jazz man Yoshio Toyama trumpets the musical traditions of New Orleans by helping keep horns in the hands of young musicians



SUSAN POAG/ THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

O. Perry Walker band director Wilbert Rawlins helps Yoshio Toyama get into his own Walker band jacket. Toyama, his band and members of the Wonderful World Jazz Foundation came to New Orleans for their yearly trip to Satchmo Summer Fest and, for the second year in a row, donated instruments to the school.



SHEILA STROUP

I felt lucky to be in the band room at O. Perry Walker High School on Thursday. I watched a cultural exchange, a musical exchange, a string of lovely moments.

One of my favorite moments occurred when band director Wilbert Rawlins gave Yoshio Toyama an official 2010 band jacket and made him an honorary member of the O. Perry Walker Marching Band.

It happened after the

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TIMES
PICAYUNE
(NEW ORLEANS)

Japanese 'Satchmo' delivers 16 instruments to high school

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renowned trumpet player presented musical instruments to the school for the second year in a row.

"You've graduated from friends to family," Rawlins told Toyama and his wife, Keiko.

With tears in his eyes and a huge smile, Toyama put on the bright orange letter jacket, personalized with his name on it.

"You look good in that jacket, man," Rawlins told him.

He wore it for the rest of the program.

The Toyamas, who come from Japan every August to perform at Satchmo Summer Fest, were at the Algiers charter school with the Dixie Saints, Toyama's traditional jazz band, plus several members of the Wonderful World of Jazz Foundation. They came to donate 16 musical instruments and \$1,000 to the charter school's jazz studies program.

After a performance by members of Walker's marching band, Toyama made his presentation and explained how the foundation came to be.

"I love Louis Armstrong. I'm called 'Satchmo' in Japan," he began.

He told the audience how he had fallen in love with the music of "Pops" as a teenager and how he and his bride had come to New Orleans in 1968 to study with the jazz masters and hang out in neighborhoods that were filled with music. They stayed for six years before returning to Japan to form a band and play traditional jazz.

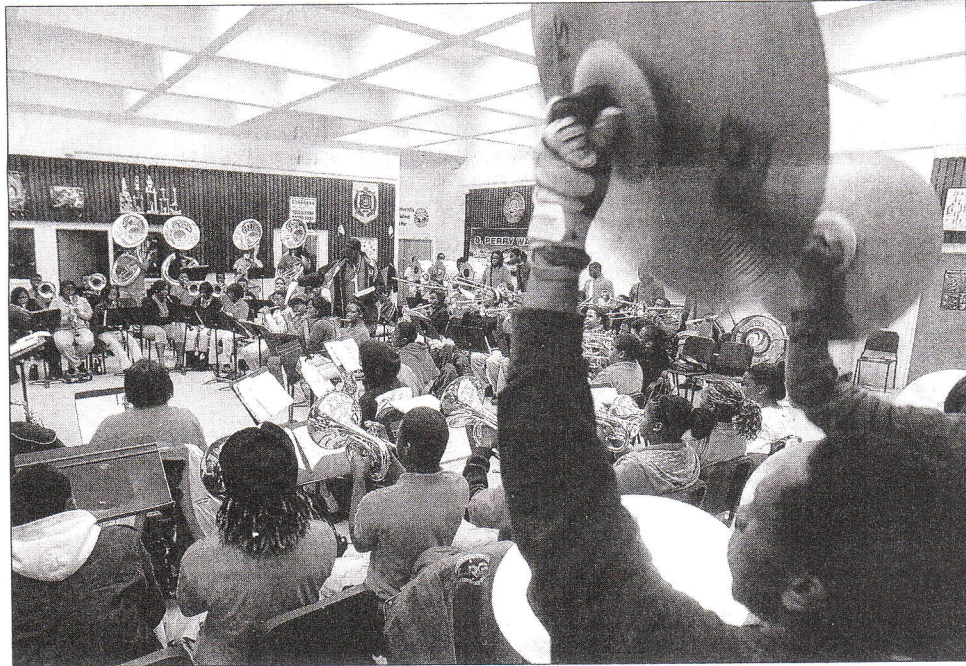
When the couple visited New Orleans 20 years later, they were shocked to see how things had changed. They remembered the high school bands having gleaming instruments in 1973.

"But in the '90s, they were all beat up, and kids had guns and drugs," he said. "It was sad for me. The places we used to visit had become so dangerous we were afraid to go there."

They returned to Japan and started the Wonderful World of Jazz Foundation so they could put horns in the hands of teenagers instead of guns.

"The people of Japan wanted to send horns to New Orleans because Louis Armstrong gave such a wonderful present called jazz to the world," he said. "We've been doing it for 15 years. We've brought 760 instruments to New Orleans."

He went on to say how heart-broken foundation members had been to learn that Brandon Franklin, the band's 22-year-old assistant director, had been shot



SUSAN POAG / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Members of the O. Perry Walker Marching Band practices at the college and career preparatory charter school in Algiers in a January photo. On Thursday, a portion of the band performed for Japanese jazz man Yoshio Toyama, who donated 16 instruments and \$1,000 to Walker's jazz studies program.

to death in May.

"It is very sad that Brandon had a fate like that," he said.

Toyama first met the young musician in 2003, when his foundation brought 39 instruments to George Washington Carver School. At the time, Rawlins was the band director at Carver and Franklin was one of his students. Franklin also played saxophone in To Be Continued, the brass band Rawlins had started to give students a future in music.

After Hurricane Katrina closed the 9th Ward school, Rawlins ended up in Beaumont, Texas. When he came home in 2006 to take the job at O. Perry Walker, Franklin enrolled in the school and worked with his mentor until he graduated and went off to college.

Toyama told the students about seeing Franklin in 2006, when To Be Continued met the Japanese visitors at the airport as they arrived for Satchmo Summer Fest.

"We brought 40 instruments, and Brandon was there," he said. "I gave him a tenor sax to replace the one he lost in the hurricane."

Toyama introduced Okimitsu Fukamachi, a member of the foundation who was so distressed over the young musician's death he decided to do something for Franklin's two young children.

"The need for 'horns for guns' has never been greater," Fukamachi said, handing an envelope to Rawlins. "Please accept my

donation of \$1,000 to help in any way to achieve peace."

Then Fukamachi and Junichi Hasegawa continued the tribute to Franklin by playing "Amazing Grace" on traditional Japanese bamboo flutes.

For Walker's band director, a proud moment was introducing his assistant director's legacy, the brass band Franklin started at O. Perry Walker.

"Just like I started To Be Continued at Carver, he started The Chosen Ones here," Rawlins said.

The Toyamas began to dance when The Chosen Ones played "I'll Fly Away." The band continued with its version of Al Green's "Let's Stay Together," singing the lyrics with a jazzy beat.

Finally, it was time for the Dixie Saints to play.

"Maybe you know this song. If you want to, you can join in," Toyama told the high school musicians. Then the band launched into a rousing rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In," with Toyama alternately wailing on his trumpet, singing in his gravelly "Satchmo" voice and second-lining around the room.

The program was one memorable moment after another for me. One minute, I felt like crying. The next, I wanted to get up and dance.

I thought back to the day in 2003 when I was at Carver for Toyama's instrument presentation — the day he and Rawlins

met and formed an instant bond based on their love of music and their belief that the children of New Orleans are worth saving.

That belief is what drew Rawlins back to New Orleans from a dream job in Texas after the storm. That belief is what keeps him awake at night, mourning for one of his students.

When Thursday's program was over, Rawlins told me he'd had to put away his photographs of Franklin after he was killed. He had gotten them out to display that morning, and he had sat in the band room and talked to the young man who had so much promise.

"I'm a big guy, but sometimes I just cry like a baby over Brandon," he said. "A beautiful kid like that is not here because of some foolishness."

It is all the other beautiful kids who keep him walking into that band room every day. And knowing that a trumpet player from the other side of the world is as committed to them as he is.

"When I see what Yoshio is doing and how he keeps coming back, he makes me want to continue on as a high school band director," Rawlins said. "I really feel compelled to help these kids."

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Sheila Stroup's column appears Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday in Living. She can be reached at sstroup@timespicayune.com or 985.898.4831. Comment and read more at NOLA.com/living.

"I really got it from my mother," he said. "My mother lived to be 92. Her grandmother yet she was a college graduate. She was in the Spellman class of 1942. She taught art for 30 years with her Social Security. She saved for her children's education. She's the oldest, I had first grandmothers put her in Morehouse College. She also did financial planning. She's got money for, 'She's got it,' all from her Social Security checks."

Lee said he called her mother Mama.

"And in her late 80s, I would speak to her. She'd be in Atlanta. She'd say, 'Mama, I'll be there tomorrow night.' 'Spikey, if God is willing, the creek don't rise.' She's a tribute to my grandfather. She's also a tribute to the things that you do in a four-hour documentary."

Lee said he called the film's concluding sequences shot in New Orleans during the Super Bowl in the production journal.

"We knew the going to win," he said. "We very few times in this happens, but weren't trying to win. They had a cause. What Peyton Man to do, it was not going to be."

"The Saints win that game. We Saints knew it. We knew it. And so we'd film the end of it."

"But BP cut it out. We went around safe. The thing blew up. The thing died, and it charred the outlook" of the film.

Now, the Saints' victory and its impact is a key element. (Will we ever tire of interception and Almost the entire hour is dedicated to spill and its aftermath.)

In between, about the overexposed Orleans' public schools, the It Right Foundation, the Lower 9th Ward, the Mississippi Gulf Coast ("Because they are in the love of the had in 'Levees with Mississippi one, too," Lee visits Haiti between earth quake and hurricane recovery. Production