

# **Overview**

Of

The Conrad Johnson Music & Fine Arts Foundation

The late Great Jazz Saxophonist and Educator Icon, Texas Bandmaster's Hall of Fame Inductee Conrad O. Johnson "Prof" has long been recognized as one of the premier jazz musicians in Houston and the nation. He has shared the spotlight with jazz and rhythm and blues stars such as Najee, Wynton Marsalis, Kirk Whalum, Lou Rawls, Grover Washington, Dizzy Gillespie, Arnett Cobb, Johnny Hartman, Roy Hamilton, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson and Johnny Nash. He has developed the basis for successful bands at Jack Yates High School and later at Booker T. Washington High School where he organized his first stage band. Later, he built some of the best bands in the country at Kashmere Senior High School. Because of his efforts, Mr. Johnson was inducted into the Texas Bandmaster's Hall of Fame. The Houston Independent School District recognized his accomplishments and honored him by naming a music school after him, The Conrad Johnson School of Music and Fine Arts, which is housed at Kashmere High School.

Posthumously, "Prof" Johnson remains a vital force in Houston music education. His contributions and achievements are so significant and meritorious that The Conrad Johnson Music and Fine Arts Foundation (Foundation) which was established in 1999 continue his legacy, ensuring that Houston Area youth continue to receive an invaluable music education. This non-profit organization was created with the goal of providing educational and scholarship opportunities to Houston area high school students of music and fine arts and to encourage students to use the discipline they receive in the arts to further their lifelong goals.

## **Fundraising Highlights**

Since 2000, the Foundation has held several fundraising events and used the proceeds to provide more than \$70,000 in scholarship support and instruments to area students. The fundraisers featured the talents of and many local and national artists which included, but not limited to, Melanie Lawson, Deborah Duncan, Phylicia Allen Rashad (of the Bill Cosby Show fame) as well as jazz artists Najee, Steve Turre, Horace Alexander Young, Alva Nelson, Joe Sample, Tex Allen, Hubert, Eloise, Donna, and Debra Laws, Joe Carmouche, Kyle Turner, Everette Harp and Michael Ward.

## **Sponsorships**

Through the generous donations and sponsorships of area businesses, corporations, and private contributors, The Conrad Johnson Music and Fine Arts Foundation is a dream come true for students in the Greater Houston and Texas Gulf Coast areas. Some are introduced to jazz improvisation or fine arts for the first time; others have the opportunity to sharpen their skills. "Prof" felt the need to pass on his legacy to the future generations of aspiring artists, and the Foundation is the route he has chosen.

## Conrad O. Johnson Music and Fine Arts Foundation

Music and the fine arts - in particular the unique American art form of improvisational jazz - offer opportunities to motivate and provide youth with skills essential to their future roles as leaders in their chosen fields of endeavor. In this regard, the mission of the COJ Music and Fine Arts Foundation is to encourage the development of young people in the Gulf Coast area through the support of educational programs that nurture and promote their artistic abilities. The resources of the Foundation are likewise used to supplement the ability of school-based music programs to provide the resources essential to our youth exploring, developing and refining their artistic talents.

The principal programs supported by the foundation are presented in the form of workshops, master classes, seminars, group lessons, and scholarships. The specific programs are outlined below.

- ***Instrument Acquisition Program*** - this effort was originally intended to offset inadequate funding for instruments and music instruction at **Kashmere High School** and the fledgling music efforts underway at Houston area schools. The Foundation believes that every student musician should have access to an instrument for use in class, during lessons and independent practice, and when performing.
- ***Student Musician Scholarship Program*** - this important activity is intended to encourage the pursuit of post-secondary education as an avenue for the further development of artistic and performance skills. The Foundation believes that deserving youth who achieve academically, demonstrate leadership, and seek opportunities for enhanced performance ability should have access to the financial resources needed to get underway.
- ***Performance Enrichment Program*** - this effort provides private instruction in small group after-school sessions. The Foundation believes that such small group instruction offers repeated opportunities for mentoring by accomplished artists that contribute to character building and the molding of important life skills.
- ***COJ Jazz Workshop and Competition*** - this annual workshop brings together youth nominated for participation by directors of music programs throughout Harris County who study big band theory, sound engineering, and music technology while refining their music performance skills under the direction of "master" musicians. The workshop culminates with the critique of ensemble performances. The Foundation believes that the workshop creates an atmosphere in which budding jazz artists can socialize, talk shop and nurture dreams while enhancing performance talents through critical review.
- ***Houston Regional Youth Jazz Orchestra*** - this undertaking provides a vehicle for young musicians to develop and display their artistic skills unique to the jazz idiom. The Foundation believes that weekly rehearsals and public performances throughout the academic year will provide an additional motivation to lead and perform within the community, as well as the national level.

The COJ Music and Fine Arts Foundation takes its name from Conrad O. Johnson, the most widely recognized and beloved music educator in Houston. His former students include professional musicians and distinguished members of the Houston and business community - to whom "Prof" taught not only the fundamentals of musicianship, but also the habit of discipline and determination that served as foundations for their later success. The Foundation is a 501(c)3 corporation organized for the charitable, literary and educational purposes identified.