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July, 2025

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The ATJS Jazz Messenger is circulated mostly by e-mail, and is published as we have an important message or gather enough material to assemble a new issue. We are approaching our 2025-26 season, as good an occasion as any to crank out a new issue.

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## President's Message by Dave Stoddard



The Austin Traditional Jazz Society opens its 2025-26 season on hard times. The landscape has changed as a result of the pandemic. Expenses are up and concert attendance, memberships and donations are down. This is not unique to the Society—from what we hear, arts organizations of varying descriptions are having a difficult time regaining their former positions. In the years leading up to the pandemic, we were replacing members about as fast as they left us. When operations resumed in 2022, half of the membership was gone and we have made no headway in rebuilding our ranks.

It is important to sign up existing and new members, attract as many paying guests as possible, and hope that our contributors can help close the gap. Recent changes to the IRS standard deduction make it very difficult for many people to claim donations as a tax deduction. Please be assured that donations to the Society are now more meaningful than ever. This past year the Society ran at a substantial loss. There is a silver lining in all this—the jazz has been very good and the coming season promises more of it.

Unfortunately membership dues and admissions are not enough to cover the cost of doing business. The Society built up a reserve fund during the good years. The Board had to dip into it this past season for the first time in many years. This and our income will see the Society through a few years to come. The future of the Society is in doubt, however.

There is also the matter of Society leadership. The Board has gone from eleven Directors to only seven. Nominations for Director are now open until the October concert. If you have ever thought about being on the Board, this is a good chance to find out what it is like. You can self-nominate or have someone nominate you either by e-mail at [info@atjs.org](mailto:info@atjs.org) or orally at the September or October concerts.

Qualifications for Director are simple—you must be a current member and be willing to work for the betterment of the Society. We will try to find suitable assignments for any new Director, but business, marketing or computer skills would be helpful. I am acting as Treasurer, so an accountant or bookkeeper would be a welcome addition to the Board.

A constant theme in Board meetings is how to gain better exposure within the Greater Austin Area. In recent years, two new avenues have been tried. The Society has a lively presence on Instagram with 570 followers. Postings include ATJS concert previews, upcoming jazz documentaries and movies on TV, and observances for music-themed holidays such as International Jazz Day and International Tuba Day. I have also been posting jazz events on NextDoor, an Internet community discussion website.

In closing, I urge everyone to contribute to our Austin traditional jazz scene. The Austin Traditional Jazz Society is one of only two traditional jazz societies of its kind in Texas. A new traditional jazz society in San Antonio is just taking shape. The Society helps to support local musicians (and we have some fine jazz artists), but they also need your support at the club gigs. Please follow our Local Events webpage, and support traditional jazz wherever you find it.

## Thanks to our Poster Hosts!

Every month, the Society puts up posters for its concerts. Here are our current poster venues.

Music & Arts Round Rock, TX Cedar Park, TX	Capital Music Center 6101 Burnet Road Austin, TX	Westbank String Shop 6301 Manchaca Road Austin, TX
Strait Music Company North 13945 Research Boulevard Austin, TX	Better Than New Band Repair 1402-C Chisholm Trail Round Rock, TX	Upper Crust Bakery 4508 Burnet Road Austin, TX
Fresh Plus Grocery 2917 West Anderson Lane Austin, TX	Phil's Ice House 13265 North US 183 Austin, TX	Austin Public Library

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### Nominations for ATJS Board of Directors

The following incumbent Directors have agreed to stand for re-election. Director Paolo Dumancas has declined to run. Nominations for Director are open as of the publication of this newsletter and will be solicited at the Society business meeting during the September 21 concert. The election of Directors will take place at the business meeting during the October concert. If additional persons are nominated, they will be added to the Board. Persons can be nominated at a meeting or via e-mail at [info@atjs.org](mailto:info@atjs.org).

Dave Stoddard	President	Bill Troiano	Director
Don Denzin	Recording Secretary	Dave Bedrich	Director
Nancy-Jane Griffith	Director	Kate McCarthy	Director
Becky Maddox	Director		

### The 2025-26 Season

The 2025-26 season will have all events at Ben Hur Shrine Temple, 7811 Rockwood Lane in Austin. Membership dues for the year remain at \$60 for single memberships, \$110 for couples and \$25 for students. It would be most helpful if persons renewing their memberships would do so before the September concert. The 2025-26 membership application is enclosed in this newsletter. A fillable PDF version is on the website. Filled applications with checks can be sent to ATJS, P.O. Box 27694, Austin 78755. Memberships can be renewed through PayPal at [info@atjs.org](mailto:info@atjs.org). if you fill out all of the PayPal boxes you can dispense with the ATJS application. You can also renew at an ATJS concert.

Sunday, September 21, 2025	Swing Shift of Austin
Sunday, October 19, 2025	The Relevators
Sunday, November 23, 2025	Vic's Hot Six
Sunday, February 1, 2026	Annual ATJS Jam Session
Sunday, March 15, 2026	Give 'Em Rhythm (a new traditional jazz band led by Don Denzin)
Sunday, April 19, 2026	Violet Crown Serenaders
Sunday, June 7, 2026	Silver Creek Jazz Band

## International Jazz Day Concert at Long Center on April 30, 2025

Four Austin-area jazz societies presented an International Jazz Day Concert at Long Center on Sunday, April 30. The Austin Traditional Jazz Society was represented by Silver Creek Jazz Band. Other groups which performed were the Austin Women in Jazz Quartet featuring Pamela Hart, the Austin Youth Jazz Orchestra and an all-star big band. For the third year in a row the concert was a sellout.



## Traditional Jazz at Dell Diamond

The Round Rock Express likes traditional jazz to entertain baseball fans before big events. Thus far this season Swing Shift played before Opening Day on April 1. Silver Creek Jazz Band played on July 4.



Swing Shift on April 1



Silver Creek Jazz Band on July 4

## Austin-Area Traditional Jam Sessions

Most traditional jazz bands won't hire new musicians, even as substitutes, until they have heard them play. For a long time, the main opportunity was the annual ATJS Jam Session, held once most years. It is still the largest of the traditional jam sessions. The 2019 session at Cap City Comedy Club drew 36 musicians and an audience of 280, close to capacity for the Club when the stage and dance floors were in use. The Ben Hur stage is large, and typical jam bands feature multiple players on lead instruments.

Numbers of musicians have emerged at the ATJS Jam Sessions and gone on to play with area jazz bands. These have included Sean Newton, Adam Carney, Art Martinez, Ron Borden, Bill Troiano and Don Denzin. Lots of excellent musicians have donated their time to appear at the sessions, allowing emerging musicians to try their hand at the music without being overly exposed.

For several years Jim Ivy ran a monthly jam session at Star Coffee in Round Rock. These were well attended by both players and listeners, but when Star Coffee had to move things soon petered out at the new location. While they lasted, these sessions gave rise to Dave Stoddard's Round Rock Dixieland Project, which matched several high school musicians and a novice jazz trombonist with a veteran rhythm section. The group played a successful demonstration set before the 2011 ATJS All-Star Concert.

In recent years a number of jam sessions have emerged in the Austin area, allowing new musicians to come forward and veteran musicians to keep their chops up between gigs. Here is the lineup for July.

July 6 and other first Sundays, session hosted by Luke West at Slacker's Brewing Company, 12233 RM 620 near Lakeline

July 13 and 27 and other 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, Golden Hour Jazz Jam hosted by Lauryn and Ryan Gould at Batch Craft Beer and Kolaches, 3220 Manor Road

July 17 and other third Thursdays, hosted by Johnny Serrano and Dave Bedrich for the Austin Swing Syndicate at The Mansion, 2312 San Gabriel Street

July 17 and 24, hosted by Floyd Domino at Shore Raw Bar and Grill, 8665 Highway 71 near Oak Hill

July 20 and other third Sundays, the Django Jam hosted by Johnny Serrano at Batch Craft Beer and Kolaches, 3220 Manor Road.

The last Sunday of the month (except August), the Community Jazz Jam is hosted by Paul Klemperer at Barrel O Fun, 1911 Aldrich Street in the Mueller District. This session centers on listenable modern jazz, but players of all genres are welcome. When Dave Stoddard plays, he takes along lead sheets for three traditional jazz tunes. Taking along lead sheets for pet tunes is a good idea at any of these jams. Lead players should be prepared to play the lead on tunes they request.

The best way to be sure of a particular jam session is to check the events calendar on the ATJS website, and/or check the venue website. Some events appear on Instagram. Paul Klemperer has his own website and an extensive mailing list.

It should be noted that these events fall under the broad heading of traditional jazz, but not all of the music will be dixieland. The ATJS session is dedicated to the older music, although a newer tune may creep in here or there. The Django Jam centers on the music of Django Reinhardt, although other tunes are played. It and other jam sessions offer a mix of swing and older tunes. Many traditional jazz bands play some swing numbers, and jamming on them is good practice.

## All Banjos Are Not Alike

The banjo is a familiar instrument in many traditional jazz bands. Banjos with resonators are handy for outdoor and strolling gigs because they don't require amplification. The banjo is an old instrument which pre-dates jazz. There are many banjo variants which are available today.

The banjo in its modern form is considered to have been developed by African-Americans from African antecedents. Several African instruments somewhat resemble the modern banjo. Early banjos made by African slaves in the New World had a body made from a split gourd with animal skin stretched over the opening. Strings of gut or vegetable fiber were tightened over a wooden neck without frets. There are references to these instruments in the 1600s.

The modern banjo has a circular wooden body (the bodies on some older banjos were made of metal), a metal tone ring, and a head across the top of the body made of plastic. Most banjos in use by Austin-area jazz bands have a resonator plate which reflects the sound forward. The fingerboard has frets, and the strings are generally steel. Banjoists typically pluck the strings with plastic picks rather than their fingers.

The banjo became very popular during the era of minstrel shows, and this popularity carried forward during the Ragtime and Jazz Eras. With the coming of the Great Depression and the Swing Era, the banjo lost its popularity in dance orchestras and smaller jazz groups to the guitar. The string bass largely replaced the tuba at this time. The emergence of the electric guitar tended to reinforce this trend.

In 1939 a new form of traditional jazz emerged, known as the San Francisco style. The earliest ensemble was Lu Watters and the Yerba Buena Jazz Band. The San Francisco folks sought to return small-group jazz to its roots. They didn't completely succeed, as they played the old tunes but in a new way quite unlike the original versions. San Francisco Jazz featured tubas and banjos, paving the way for new generations of jazz banjoists.

### Varieties of Banjos

This discussion will not cover the five-string banjo, which has a drone string and is difficult to adapt to traditional jazz. It is a staple of bluegrass bands. Occasionally one might see a five-string banjo being played in a traditional jazz band with the drone string removed. The cello banjo and banjo-mandolin also do not appear on Austin traditional jazz stages.

The most common banjo in traditional jazz is the tenor banjo. It has four strings and a relatively short fingerboard with 17 or 19 frets. The strings are tuned in fifths, typically C-G-D-A. The tenor banjo plays chords, and is suitable for single-string solos where the banjoist plays a melodic line and nothing else.

The plectrum banjo has a longer fingerboard, typically has 22 frets, and is tuned C-G-B-D. Some banjoists use the tuning of the top four strings of a guitar, also known as Chicago tuning. The plectrum banjo is more suited to strummed chords than the tenor banjo. It is a popular chord instrument.



tenor banjos



plectrum banjo

The Six-String Banjo or Banjitar has a wider fingerboard than the four-string types. The strings receive guitar tuning, making it easy for guitarists to adapt to banjo playing. The two additional strings also make for deeper, fuller chords. Numbers of banjo manufacturers offer banjitar, but it is a jazz instrument with a historic past. New Orleans legend Johnny St. Cyr played his banjitar with many classic jazz bands, including those of Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver. In Austin, Jim Vence of Silver Creek Jazz Band plays a Deering banjitar.



6-string banjo

One of the easiest string instruments to play is the ukulele. Ukuleles come in a variety of sizes, but don't generate much volume. Ukulele players can get around this by tackling the banjo-ukulele, also known as the banjolele or banjo-uke. The banjo-uke is smaller than other banjos, and not surprisingly adopts concert ukulele tuning: GCEA. Larger banjo-ukes use baritone ukulele tuning. Modern banjo-ukes vary in size and can have between 16 and 20 frets. They can generate larger volumes of sound than a ukulele and will fit into a traditional jazz band in a pinch. Banjo-ukes have been found at the Austin Banjo Club over the years.



banjo-ukulele

Finally, we have the bass banjo, which to tell the truth is not seen in the Austin area. Bass banjos have the same tuning as the bottom four strings of a guitar, and depending on their size can be played as a laptop instrument or like a stand-up bass. The double-bass banjo has the same tuning as a string bass. They are novelty instruments, but the player who has one will stand out in a crowd!



double-bass banjo



# Austin Traditional Jazz Society

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**JOIN NOW... to enjoy and preserve traditional jazz in Austin and Central Texas!**

The Austin Traditional Jazz Society's 2025-26 year runs to June 30, 2026. Dues for the season remain at \$60 per person, or \$110 per couple. Student memberships remain at \$25. Membership entitles you to free admission to each of the Society's regular concerts, discounted admission to ATJS special events, and e-mail notifications about jazz events of interest in Central Texas. Each member also receives two free passes which can be used at any regular concert. Please include your email address to receive announcements. You can turn in your application at a concert, mail it to the Society or join through the ATJS website, at [www.atjs.org](http://www.atjs.org). You can also scan and e-mail the application and pay through PayPal. The PayPal address is [info@atjs.org](mailto:info@atjs.org). PLEASE NOTE: Membership cards will be held at Will Call at the concert front desk.

Please print legibly

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse/ Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in all spaces so we are sure your information is up-to-date.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Musician? What instrument(s) do you play? \_\_\_\_\_

**ANNUAL DUES:**

Individual, \$60: \_\_\_\_\_ Couple, \$110: \_\_\_\_\_ Student, \$25: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to ATJS Education Outreach Fund: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL (make checks payable to "ATJS"): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please present this application at a concert, or mail it with your check to: Austin Traditional Jazz Society, P. O. Box 27694; Austin, TX, 78755-7694. Applications can also be submitted through PayPal.

Cut here ----- Cut here

Retain for your records:

Membership – Austin Traditional Jazz Society -- 2025–26 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Education Outreach contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

*ATJS is dedicated to the preservation and performance of traditional jazz in Austin and Central Texas.*