

FESTIVAL NEWS

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[www.wchandymusicfestival.org](http://www.wchandymusicfestival.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

July 12, 2006

**W.C. HANDY MUSIC CAMP CARRIES ON BLUES COMPOSER'S LASTING INSPIRATION**

*"... If my serenade of song and story should serve as a pillow for some composer's head ...  
I will not have labored in vain."*

– **W.C. Handy**,  
from his autobiography,  
*Father of the Blues* (1941)

**By Haley Henslee**

*W.C. Handy Music Festival*

FLORENCE, Alabama – One line from W.C. Handy's pen inspired a generation to create the W.C. Handy Festival Music Camp, presented in the Muscle Shoals area each summer in partnership with the University of North Alabama's Department of Music.

This year's camp – honoring the musical legacy of the "Father of the Blues," Florence native W.C. Handy – began Monday, July 10, on the UNA campus. The 14<sup>th</sup> annual camp concludes with a free public concert at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, July 13, in the UNA Band Room.

"The camp consists of four days of intensive music study at UNA," said Nancy Gonce, who assisted professional jazz musician Mike Shepherd and former UNA band director Dr. Edd Jones in establishing the camp as an educational extension of the area's annual W.C. Handy Music Festival. The founders set up the curriculum using state jazz honor-band criteria to help prepare students for the state level.

Young music students who attend the camp study music theory and improvisation. Sectional and ensemble sessions are provided, as well as private lessons from professional musicians. Camp students as well as the accomplished musicians who make up the faculty will perform during the 2006 W.C. Handy Music Festival, which takes place throughout the Shoals from Friday, July 21, through Sunday, July 30. Students travel from throughout the region in order to participate in the camp and perform at the festival.

"Many of the students are in (middle or) high school jazz bands," Gonce said. "Others don't have jazz bands at their schools, but want to learn more about the musical technique."

This year's faculty includes a variety of talented professional musicians, including Ken Watters (trumpet), Howard Lamb (trombone), Tim Goodwin (bass), Rick Bell (saxophone), Mike Shepherd (drums) and Mel Deal (guitar). Hosts Dr. Edd Jones and Lloyd Jones (current director UNA's band program) and camp directors Terry Ownby, band director for Muscle Shoals Middle School, and James Ed Champion, former band director for Bradshaw High School, organized this year's camp.

Professional musician and trombone instructor Lamb, an adjunct professor at the University of Memphis, has been a music-camp faculty member for about 10 years. He particularly enjoys teaching music students at the junior high level.

“They get to learn things at an early age, and they get an opportunity to improvise,” Lamb said. “That’s a main feature of jazz. When the students are this young, you can pretty much teach them anything. The lessons take more meaning for them.”

Lamb specializes in instructing private lessons and working in an ensemble setting, teaching techniques on “how to help sections blend, get their timing right, and how to interpret music.”

The W.C. Handy Music Camp culminates with the closing concert in the UNA Band Room at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, July 13, featuring camp faculty and students. From there, participating music students will perform as the Music Camp All-Stars during the 2006 W.C. Handy Music Festival.

“This camp does it all,” Lamb said. “It’s a very well-rounded program.”

For a complete listing of 2006 W.C. Handy Music Festival events (including appearances by the Handy Music Camp All-Stars), visit the festival’s Web site at [www.wchandymusicfestival.org](http://www.wchandymusicfestival.org). Printed Handy schedules – along with official festival posters, T-shirts, mugs, buttons, blankets, chairs and other 2006 merchandise – will be available starting Monday, July 17, at the Handy Headquarters, located in the annex of the Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts, 217 E. Tuscaloosa St., downtown Florence. The office number is (256) 766-7642.