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fitness are the most important qualities in kids who try out for the team, local coaches say. **1E**

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EDUCATION

Life, passion and all that jazz

Booker T.'s mentor to the stars shares special kinship with students

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Bart Marantz says he's been taught by the best — Norah Jones, Roy Hargrove, Erykah Badu.

But wouldn't that be the

student teaching the teacher? "I've come to a point in my life where I'm OK with that," says Marantz, 60. "I just want to see the music carry on and go forward."

Under Marantz's direction, it has, for almost three decades.

As head of jazz studies at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Marantz has sent hundreds of future musicians

into the world, some of them gaining superstar status.

"When I got here, I really thought I had something to do with [students'] success," he says, leaning against a Baldwin grand piano in the Dallas school's jazz studio.

Later, he realized he was learning as much from his students as they were from him.

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KYE R. LEE/Staff Photographer

Bart Marantz was inducted this summer into *DownBeat* magazine's Jazz Education Hall of Fame.

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

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"There's a light bulb that goes off. You can actually see a young artist click visually when they understand what you're talking about."

Bart Marantz, head of jazz studies at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts

Educator imparts passion, and all that jazz

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Others are willing to give him a little more credit. This summer, *DownBeat* magazine inducted Marantz into its Jazz Education Hall of Fame.

Hargrove, one of the most celebrated jazz trumpeters in the world, says nobody deserves it more.

"Cats like Bart, they don't get the credit for what they do," he says.

DownBeat publisher Frank Alkyer says the magazine views the inductions as the Grammys of music education.

"We know that the reason that jazz continues to flourish and be out there is thanks to great jazz educators like Bart," Alkyer says.

Fellow Booker T. jazz instructor Roger Boykin says Marantz "can give the kids something that doesn't come out of books. He's definitely a contribution to the national jazz scene."

A rented trumpet

The son of two salespeople — one of whom was an opera buff — Marantz fell in love with jazz at age 10, at a neighbor's house in Miami. They were listening to a recording of legendary trumpeter Al Hirt.

Marantz was so entranced that he went out and bought the album.

He launched his playing career with a "piece of junk" bugle he borrowed from a neighbor, and he later persuaded his parents to rent him a trumpet and pay for summer lessons. (He still keeps in touch with his first trumpet teacher, Frank Biringer, now 77.)

In high school, Marantz



FILE 2009/The New York Times

Grammy winner Norah Jones, with Willie Nelson at a show in New York, was one of Bart Marantz's standout students.

played jazz in the bars and nightclubs of downtown Miami. Through college and into his late 20s, he hooked up with a number of bands — including "Ray's band," he says, casually omitting the last name "Charles."

It wasn't until he was 28 and married a classical pianist that he decided it was time to settle down and try teaching.

A friend called him, raving about Booker T.

Marantz was skeptical.

He doesn't have good memories of his own high school musical experience. No one was interested in teaching jazz, he says. His only alternatives were joining the classical or marching bands. Marantz wanted the opportunity to improvise.

After some prodding, Marantz called Booker T.'s principal to ask about a teaching job.

"I asked, 'Do you guys have a marching band?' He said no, and he laughed," Marantz recalls. "I said, 'Well, I'm definitely interested.'"

That was in 1983. He got the job.

Waiting for students

On this summer day in 2010, Marantz is sporting his normal casual wear: brown leather moccasins, a silky black button-down shirt, blue jeans.

The walls of his tiny jazz studio at Booker T. are peppered with certificates and concert posters. His silver-plated trumpet, a lightweight Bach he bought in 1973, lies on top of the Baldwin piano.

But the classroom is empty. The 20 or so chairs in the studio are pushed to a corner, drums line the side of one wall, and the hallways are dark.

He's waiting for his students to return, for those moments he lives for, when, as an educator, he can present them with ideas and help them fashion their own statement.

"There's a light bulb that goes off," Marantz says. "You can actually see a young artist click



FILE/Staff Photo

Roy Hargrove, rehearsing at school in 1986, says, "Cats like Bart, they don't get the credit for what they do."

visually when they understand what you're talking about."

For Richmond Punch, a professional violinist who experiments with all genres of music, that moment came during his sophomore year at Booker T.

Punch entered the school as a classical violinist. Then he took Marantz's jazz improvisation class as a sophomore. He learned to play his first jazz piece, the popular "All the Things You Are," on the piano.

"He had me then," Punch says. "From that point on, the seed was planted."

Punch ended up at the prestigious Juilliard School of Music in New York after high school, buried in Mozart and Beethoven. But he spent his nights listening to the likes of Miles Davis and Frank Sinatra.

"I ran to jazz," he says. "I had to find it."

That's Marantz's X factor. He does more than teach students how to play. He gives them a full history lesson — explaining where the jazz greats

grew up, what music they listened to, what spurred them to teach their music to others.

In one anecdote, Marantz tells his students how John Coltrane, whom he calls the "Einstein" of jazz, practiced the simplest of melodies on his saxophone well into the morning after late-night gigs.

"These are people that would rather play than eat," Marantz says.

His stories make an impression. Senior Lessie Vonner says learning about the artists' lives taught him that the best jazz players share a particular quality: passion.

"If he sees that in you," says the young trumpeter, "then he's going to do everything he can to help you out."

Stellar alumni

Sometimes, you just have to know when to step back, take your teaching hat off.

Marantz realized that about 30 seconds into hearing a 14-

year-old boy — Roy Hargrove — play the trumpet at a middle school performance.

At one point, Marantz quit playing around Hargrove. He was that good.

"If I pulled that horn out while Roy Hargrove was around as a senior," he says, "it was too clean it."

There was a time Marantz had to show the young prodigy some tough love, when Hargrove started skipping classes. He warned him to shape up or risk being kicked out.

"He was hard on us," Hargrove says, "but it made us better musicians."

Today, Hargrove is one of Marantz's favorites.

"I love him," Marantz says. "He's a great kid."

Marantz still remembers when Hargrove teamed up with Erykah Badu for a concert. It was shortly after they graduated from Booker T.

"Erykah was talking to Roy and said: 'You know, Roy, I just recorded for a small label last week, and I've just got a feeling about this album. And if it hits, it's going to go with a bullet.'"

That debut album, the Grammy-winning *Baduizm*, launched the singer's career.

At a concert earlier this year, Marantz says, he visited with another celebrated graduate — singer and pianist Norah Jones. Teacher and student talked backstage like they were back at Booker T.

"That's the beauty of being an instructor or a mentor," Marantz says. "Those people remain with you."

Hargrove wouldn't have it any other way.

"I'm glad he's still around," he says. "It's a blessing for all of us."