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Hall High School's 68th Pops 'n Jazz Brings the Art of "Putting It Together" to the Stage

WEST HARTFORD, CT — February 11, 2026 — Hall High School proudly invites the community to experience the 68th annual production of *Pops 'n Jazz*, a beloved West Hartford tradition showcasing the school's extraordinary jazz musicians, singers, dancers, and theatre students. This year's production explores the magic behind the music with a theatrical theme of ***Putting It Together***, and tells the story of the collaboration and dedication of the student performers and crew members who make up PnJ. *Putting it Together* offers old standards and new showstoppers sure to excite the audience. The performances begin on March 13, with additional evening shows on March 14, 19, 20, and 21. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. each night, and the curtain rises at 7:00 p.m. *Pops 'n Jazz* will also offer an abridged, family-friendly matinee on Sunday, March 15, at 1 p.m. This 50-minute performance will highlight select moments from the evening shows.

More than a concert, Pops 'n Jazz 2026 pulls back the curtain on the creative process and places the spotlight squarely on the unwavering devotion of the Hall High School Jazz Dancers, Choraliers, Jazz Bands and Theater students. The show builds **bit by bit**—by the end of the night, you may find that you simply can't control your feet. Now in their second year as co-directors, **Phil Giampietro and Kate Morran** embraced the challenge. "For *Putting It Together*, we considered an even wider range of repertoire," said Giampietro. "Some of it required extra care to tailor for a full jazz band, but that challenge became part of the excitement."

Pops 'n Jazz 2026 features more than 100 student performers, including the school's Concert Jazz Band, Jazz Ensemble, Jazz Dancers, and Choraliers (singers). The program offers an array of American jazz classics from all eras, performed in big band settings, highly choreographed jazz productions, and featured solo performances. The show is known for its eclectic blend of music, ranging from traditional and progressive jazz, to pop-rock and Broadway. Audiences will be treated to traditional jazz repertoire such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Thad Jones, Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, and more. Broadway-style selections from *West Side Story* and *A Chorus Line* are thoughtfully staged alongside selections from the world of pop and R&B.

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Pops 'n Jazz is co-directed by Mr. Giampietro and Ms. Morran, Director of Jazz Dancers. While Pops 'n Jazz is co-directed by Mr. Giampietro and Ms. Morran, it is co-produced by Mr. Giampietro and Catherine Hopkins, Hall's Theatre Director and StageCraft teacher. The Choraliers perform under the direction of Dr. Stuart Younse, Hall's Director of Choirs. In addition to being co-director, Kate Moran is Director of Jazz Dancers, who are also led by Associate Choreographer Joseph Fierberg. Costume design by Sara Avery adds a visually striking dimension to the production. The production's creative team includes Rorie Fitzsimmons as Set Designer and Hall alum Joshua Murphy as Technical Director. Greg Fisher serves as Sound Engineer and Designer, while Kevin Michael Reed is the Lighting Designer. Hall High acting and technical theatre students play a vital role behind the scenes, serving as assistant stage managers, lighting and sound operators, and members of the costumes, props, and deck crew. Additional assistance is provided by Hall High parents, teachers and staff.

Guest Artists Make Special Appearances

In addition to the student performers, invited guests from the ranks of professional musicians join them on select evenings. This year, featured guest artists include vocalist Javier Colon (March 13), saxophonist Sarah Hanahan (March 14), trumpeter Jeremy Pelt (March 19), trombonist Mariel Billsten (March 20), and saxophonist Jason Marshall (March 21). Participation of guest performers is supported by the Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust.

West Hartford Elementary and Middle School Students Share the Stage

Younger performers are also invited to share the stage with the high schoolers during select shows. Middle school singers and musicians will join for special performances on March 13 (King Philip Middle School's KP Singers), March 14 (King Philip Middle School's Jazz Band and Elementary School Junior Artists), March 19 (Bristow Middle School's Big Band), and March 20 (King Philip Middle School's Sixth Dimension). The involvement of these younger students with exemplary older students is part of the West Hartford Public School District's effort to inspire excellence and commitment to the arts.

Exceptional History, A Standout Community Strength

Hall High School proudly continues the Pops 'n Jazz musical extravaganza, which originated in 1958 with former band director Bill Stanley. Hall was one of the first high schools in the United States to integrate jazz into its daily curriculum, and Hall students have performed around the world ever since.

The West Hartford Public Schools have received the Kennedy Center Award for Excellence in Arts Education in recognition of their program and have been asked to perform at the White House. The Hall Concert Jazz Band has been selected 15 times as one of the national finalists in the Essentially Ellington Competition at Lincoln Center with Wynton Marsalis including this year. They have won the prestigious festival two times and been awarded 50+ individual outstanding student soloist and section awards over the years. Hall High School Concert Jazz Band won Best Big Band at the Charles Mingus festival in 2024 and 2025 with multiple section and soloist awards. This year Hall musicians are finalists in the Combo category. They have also been recognized as a national Downbeat Student Music Award winner from 2020 to 2024. The Concert Jazz Band won first place at the Berklee High School Jazz festival 30+ times in its 50-year festival history and won first place multiple times at the National Jazz Festival in both big



band and combo categories. In 2015, Choraliers won the “Together in Song” regional choral award through WGBY in Massachusetts.

Further, Hall’s talented students have gone on to do great things. Hall Concert Jazz Band alumni include renowned jazz musicians Kris Allen (alto sax, performed at Pops 'n Jazz 2023), Jimmy Macbride (drums), Garrett Sayers (bass), Drew Sayers (sax), Richie Barshay (drums), Joel Frahm (tenor sax), Erica von Kleist (alto sax, flute, and piccolo), Brad Mehdau (piano), Pete McGuinness (trombone), Noah Preminger (tenor sax), Alexa Tarantino (alto sax), and Gregg Kallor (piano).

Through the years, Pops 'n Jazz has welcomed some of the finest artists in the world to its stage in West Hartford, including Zaccai Curtis, Nicole Zuraitis, Luis Bonilla, Phil Woods, Wynton Marsalis, Joe Lovano, Randy Brecker, Jimmy Heath, Bob Mintzer, John Daversa, the NY Voices, Ted Nash, Wycliffe Gordon, Javier Colon, Kurt Elling, Curtis Fuller, and the Count Basie and Woody Herman Orchestras.

Online ticketing system with ASSIGNED SEATING.

Ticket sales will open online on **February 17, 2026 at 6:00 pm** at <https://pnj.ludus.com>. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for students; tickets to the Sunday matinee are \$10. Beginning in March, tickets can also be purchased in person at the Hall High School box office. Please call (860) 929-5151 for hours. Box office opens at 6 p.m. on show nights.

Like us on Facebook @popsnjazz, and follow us on Instagram @popsnjazz. For more information, please call the box office at (860) 929-5151, or visit hallhighbands.com.

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