The originator of the Texas Jazz Festival as they made music “on the rock” in Corpus Christy Bay in 1962. Courtesy Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and the Texas Jazz Festival Archives.

“Vamos, Lupongo. Es gratis.” (“Let’s go, Lupongo. It’s free.”) This is how it all started. A simple invitation by my sister, Lilonga, to go to a jazz festival on a Sunday afternoon at Heritage Park in Corpus Christi, a city of just over 300,000 located on the Texas Gulf Coast about 150 miles north of the Mexican border. Although I was in town only for a few hours, I could not pass up the invitation. “A free jazz festival in Corpus,” I said to myself. “Why not?” Off we went to enjoy the sights and sounds of the Texas Jazz Festival.

Upon arriving, I was surprised not only at the size of the crowd, but at the number of Mexican Americans present, both as performers and spectators. Although popular with many people, jazz is most often associated with African Americans. In fact, jazz is a truly original form of American music that grew mainly out of a combination of such African-American styles as blues, gospel, and ragtime.

Mexican Americans, for the most part, did not play jazz, or at least that is what I believed at the time. Furthermore, Tejanos, or Texans of Mexican descent, had developed their own musical hybrid known as música Tejana (Texas-Mexican music). Música Tejana, a blending of rancheras, canciones, conjunto, and other traditional Mexican folk music idioms with such mainstream American musical styles as country, swing, and rock and roll, developed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as Tejanos combined their musical traditions with those of other ethnic groups in the Lone Star State.

South Texas has been the epicenter for the development of música Tejana, and Corpus Christi, along with the entire coastal bend area, has produced a number of influential Texas-Mexican artists, including Tony de la Rosa, Isidro López, and Selena Quintanilla. Música Tejana, which is rooted in older Mexican folk music, absorbed the accordion and polka from German and Czech immigrants during the nineteenth century and incorporated big band swing and rock and roll during the twentieth century. Música Tejana continues to evolve in the twenty-first century, with the inclusion of rap, hip hop, and other newer influences from such artists as A.B. Quintanilla, Jr., DJ Kane, and Ricky Naranjo.

Perhaps the presence of so many Mexican-American performers and fans at the Texas Jazz Festival should not have come as such a surprise. After all, the centuries-long blending of diverse ethnic musical styles into música Tejana is clear evidence that Tejano musicians and audiences
The Texas Jazz Festival serves as a case study of how Tejanos have helped shape the rich and diverse musical heritage of our state and how jazz has further transformed the already eclectic and dynamic Texas-Mexican genre known as música tejana.

The Texas Jazz Festival during its inaugural year in 1959 was an unlikely setting for a celebration of music. However, it served as a case study of how Tejanos have helped shape the rich and diverse musical heritage of our state and how jazz has further transformed the already eclectic and dynamic Texas-Mexican genre known as música tejana.

The Origins of the Texas Jazz Festival, 1959-1961

The Texas Jazz Festival debuted in 1961, but the idea for the non-popular annual event came about a few years earlier. Joe Gallardo and Charles (Skip) Vetters were students at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, and also members of the school’s jazz club, which had formed in October 1959 to promote the appreciation of jazz on campus. At first, the jazz club members had fairly modest goals. They planned to meet in the evenings “at some person’s house” in order to review different jazz albums “that the members (would) bring.” Soon, however, they decided to invite bands to play at some of their events on campus. The first musicians to perform at a UTPA group: Eddie Olivares (trumpet), Sal Pedraza (bass), Ralph Duran (piano), Al Beto Garcia (drums), Joe Gallardo (trombone). Beto Garcia’s group included six members, two of whom also played in the UTPA group: Eddie Olivares (trumpet), Sal Pedraza (bass), Ralph Duran (piano), Al Beto Garcia (drums), Roy Cuesta (tuba), and Joe Gallardo (trombone). Similar to the earlier shows on campus, this concert was a big success, attracting more than 350 fans.

Following the success of the March concert, jazz club members eagerly began preparing for the final concert of the school year. Because of the large crowd expected, Frank Hawkins, Del Mar’s librarian and a jazz enthusiast himself, requested the free use of the College’s Richardson Auditorium, which was much larger than the Harvin Student Center. The administration agreed, and on Sunday May 1, 1960, the jazz club hosted a third concert at Del Mar College. Unlike the earlier shows, this concert was held in conjunction with the Dr. Bob Parker (trumpet), Sal Pedraza (bass), Dr. J. B. Floyd (piano), Jack Rumbley (drums), and Joe Gallardo (trombone). Beto Garcia’s group included six members, two of whom also played in the University of Texas at Pan American Group: Eddie Olivares (trumpet), Sal Pedraza (bass), Ralph Duran (piano), Al Beto Garcia (drums), Roy Cuesta (tuba), and Joe Gallardo (trombone). Similar to the earlier shows on campus, this concert was a big success, attracting more than 350 fans.

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Garcia asked several of his friends for assistance, including Wanda Gregory, a well-known jazz vocalist living in Corpus Christi. She readily agreed. He also sought out others who shared his dream of promoting jazz as a unique art form and as a means of bringing financial support to the local music community. City council and business leaders seemed to understand the cultural significance of such an event, but they also recognized the economic potential a jazz festival would have for boosting the city’s tourist industry. One individual in particular, John Nugent, a public relations executive with the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce, offered to help with publicity.

Once he had garnered support for the upcoming jazz festival, Garcia began searching for a location. Del Mar College was not an option, because the administration had already decided that its facilities would no longer be used for non-popular events. Garcia soon found a suitable site for the concert—the very popular People’s Street T-head in downtown Corpus Christi. At that time, the city’s musicians’ union, Local 644, was presenting “Sunday-by-the-Sea” concerts on the T-Head, a paved pier jutting out into the city’s marina. The city donated the site and equipment and the local union paid the musicians out of its benefit fund. Garcia approached union officials and convinced them to set aside one of the Sunday concerts for jazz. They agreed, and this became the location for the first annual Texas Jazz Festival.

Thus with the support of the Chamber of Commerce, city leaders, the local union, a dedicated group of volunteers, and countless fans, the first annual Texas Jazz Festival took place on July 8, 1961, at the band shell on the People’s Street T-Head. Five jazz groups performed that day: Red Camp and his Group, Bobby Galvan and his Swinging Octet, Al Beto Garcia and his Six Sounds, Chester Rupe and his All Stars, and Rudy Garcia and his Progressive Latin Rhythms. Three guest vocalist—Wanda Gregory, Jewell King, and Bobby Hawks—also sang.
The festival also included an unannounced guest—Houston trumpeter Luis Gasca. Gasca, an emerging Latin jazz artist who would soon achieve national and international recognition, heard about the festival and arrived unannounced. He introduced himself and asked if he could play with one of the groups. “We already had begun playing,” Garcia remembered. But Bobby Galvan, however, quickly offered to give up part of his time so that Gasca could play. The audience response to Gasca was very enthusiastic. He “stole the show,” Garcia recalled.30

The 1961 jazz festival drew such large crowds that it created traffic jams on the streets leading up to the T-Head. Police had to be called in to direct traffic leading from Cole Park, a seaside park located several miles from the festival site, to the Bayfront.31 Within a three-year period then, a gathering of musicians, led by a few Tejano performers, had organized several successful jazz festivals, recruited grassroots business, civic, and public support, and laid the foundations for one of the most enduring cultural events in the state. Over the next several decades, the original founders, in conjunction with many jazz fans and volunteers, would institutionalize and expand one of the most popular, unique, and innovative, entertainment institutions in the Southwest.

The Uniqueness of the Texas Jazz Festival

The Texas Jazz Festival was a community venture supported by many individuals, groups, and entities, including Skip Vetters, Wanda Gregory, Julia Garcia and such organizations as The Uniqueness of the Texas Jazz Festival. Vetters, however, quickly offered to give up part of his time so that Gasca could play. The audience response to Gasca was very enthusiastic. He “stole the show,” Garcia recalled.30

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The Texas Jazz Festival: Founding Pioneers

There were five particular individuals who led the way in establishing and defining the Texas Jazz Festival: Joe Gallardo, Eddie Olivares, Al “Beto” Garcia, Rudy Cuesta, and Sal Pedraza. Gallardo made the phone call to his uncle, Beto Garcia, which helped make the very first jazz concert at Del Mar College possible. However, Gallardo left Corpus Christi soon afterwards in order to pursue his dream of playing jazz internationally, although he did return to play the TJF. Joe Gallardo was born on September 29, 1939, in Corpus Christi. At age six, he began taking music lessons from his father, Jose A. Gallardo, a piano professor. Eighty years later, Joe learned to play the trumpet and soon joined the Corpus Christi Youth Symphony as the first chair and soloist. Gallardo attended Del Mar College under a full scholarship. During his freshman year, he earned first place in an annual competition.38 While in college, he also played with several local bands, including Bobby Galvan and his group, Al “Beto” Garcia and his All-Stars, and the Corpus Christi Symphony.39 After college, Gallardo joined the Luis Arecia Orchestra, one of Mexico’s best-known big bands. Gallardo also performed with the Stan Kenton Orchestra for a short time before joining the U.S. Army in 1963. He was stationed in Stuttgart, Germany, where he performed with the Seventh Army Band and toured throughout Europe. Gallardo later recalled, “I met all the band leaders and musicians in Europe,” he said. “I made some wonderful contacts.”40

After leaving the military, Gallardo returned to Texas for a brief period and played with several Tex-Mex groups, including Little Joe y la Familia. In 1974, Gallardo wrote the song “Americano (Down)” for the Mongo Santamaria Band in New York. Four years later, the song and album by the same name won the Grammy for “Best Latin recording.”41 In 1978, Gallardo returned to Europe and continued touring with such prominent American entertainers as Stan Kenton, Chet Baker, Lionel Hampton, Stan Getz, Arturo Sandoval, Woody Herman, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Liza Minnelli, Peggy Lee, and many others. “The pay is much better [in Europe] than in the United States,” he noted in 1980. “[M]usicians also get much more time off, six or eight weeks in summer, five in winter, and two in the spring.”42 While in Europe, Gallardo recorded the album Joe Gallardo Latin Blue, which combined Latin and jazz influences into what he termed “a fusion of two styles.”43 In 1990, Gallardo became a member of the NDR Big Band in Hamburg, Germany. In addition to performing, he taught as a music professor in Germany until 2006, when he retired.44 Years earlier, while still students at Del Mar College, Joe Gallardo, Skip Vetters, and several others, discussed the idea of establishing an organization that would promote jazz music in Corpus Christi. “My conception of jazz,” Gallardo said in 2009, “has always been to include everybody that plays jazz and to bring in people from other cities like Houston that could collaborate, hear others play and learn.”45 By launching the Texas Jazz Festival, Gallardo, Vetters, and their fellow jazz enthusiasts created an event in Corpus Christi at which musicians could collaborate and innovate while performing different styles of jazz.

Sal Pedraza and Raul Cuesta also played important roles in starting the Texas Jazz Festival. Pedraza began as a French horn player, but when Beto Garcia needed a bass player, Pedraza switched to bass. He played for years with the Corpus Christi Symphony and led his own jazz group, Bossa Tres. Pedraza and his wife, Tana, designed, built, and installed the jazz-themed stage backdrop that was used during the earlier Texas Jazz Festivals. Rudy Cuesta, who was born into a prominent musical family, quickly became an accomplished saxophone player. In 1966, he moved to Houston, where he worked with many notable musicians. However, Cuesta regularly returned to Corpus Christi to play the Texas Jazz Festival. Both Pedraza and Cuesta donated their time and talents to promoting jazz and the TJF throughout the state.46 Pedraza died in 1991 and Cuesta in 2006.47

Undoubtedly, the two most influential founding members of the Texas Jazz Festival were Al “Beto” Garcia and Eddie Olivares. Garcia was born in 1928 to a family of jazz musicians. His father, Alberto Garcia, started the Alberto Garcia Jazz Band in 1924. Beto Garcia’s mother was a vocalist and pianist and occasionally played drums in her husband’s group. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Garcia’s parents played at a North Beach nightclub to earn extra money. All of their sons, including Beto, Manuel, Pete, and Rudy, became successful jazz musicians. Beto Garcia began as a trumpeter player, but during a rehearsal with Eddie Olivares, Sr. and Tony Hernandez, Garcia was

As a child, Eddie Olivares taught himself to play trumpet by watching his father perform. In February 28, 1931, in Mercedes, Texas. His father was a violinist in a jazz band in the early 1940s. Olivares’s uncle was the famed saxophonist Ernesto Caceres, who played with the Glenn Miller Orchestra on such hits as “The Mood.”

As a child, Eddie Olivares taught himself to play trumpet by watching his father perform. In 1946, when Eddie Olivares was a seventh-grader at Northside Junior High School, his brother bought him a trumpet. Olivares went on to join a local group and play his first gig at The Golden Triangle, a nightclub located in the Westside area of Corpus Christi. The band eventually began performing there on weekends.

After graduating from high school, Olivares attended Del Mar College, which offered musical scholarships as a way to attract students to perform at football games and other school activities. Accepting this scholarship was difficult for Olivares, because he was already earning good money working in nightclubs around town. Nevertheless, he worked hard to balance both his academic and musical careers and graduated from Del Mar College in 1952. Afterwards, he enrolled in the University of North Texas in Denton and The University of Texas at Austin, earning a bachelor of music degree in 1956 and a master of music degree in 1961.

After college, Olivares taught music in Laredo, Texas, for two years before returning to Corpus Christi. He worked at Sundrem Junior High School for several years, and, in 1967, he transferred to Moody High School, where he conducted the school band. Although this was the late 1960s, and the big band era was long past its peak, Olivares made sure to teach his students jazz and swing tunes. He also served as director of the jazz ensemble, as well as an instructor of jazz history at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Olivares retired from the public school system in 1991 but continued teaching jazz history at A&M while also performing locally.

Olivares absorbed a variety of musical influences while growing up. His father and brother introduced him to jazz and big band swing music. Over the decades, Olivares fronted his own dance band or performed in bands that backed up well-known musicians, including Tony Bennett, Julio Iglesias, and Vickie Carr. He also performed with the Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra, the Corpus Christi Municipal Band, and various local jazz and dance ensembles. As one of the founders of the Texas Jazz Festival, Olivares performed there for many years with the TJF All-Stars, a quintet composed of the five original festival founders. Likewise, he directed the inter-denominational jazz choir for three decades, beginning in 1973. In 2009, he was inducted into the Water Street Walk of Fame, located in Corpus Christi.

Olivares shared Beto Garcia’s dream of promoting a jazz festival in Corpus Christi, which would showcase the talents of local musicians. “We were feeling way back we wanted to promote South Texas jazz and its Latin sound,” said Olivares. “We want to promote Corpus Christi on the map through music and we wanted to push jazz education for the young to perpetuate jazz here.” By helping organize and perpetuate the Texas Jazz Festival also showcased a variety of musicians from high schools, universities, and communities across the state and beyond.

In keeping with the bi-cultural character of the festival, many prominent Latino artists have also appeared. Among the best-known are Pedro Beltrán Ruiz y su Orquesta (Sinaloa, Mexico), Luis Arcear y su Orquesta (Mexico City, Mexico), Claudio Rosas y sus Hermanos (Mexico), Luis Arcear (San Antonio, Texas), Luis Garcia (Los Angeles, California), and Adela Dalo (New York City). The Texas Jazz Festival also showcased a variety of musicians from high schools, universities, and communities across the state and beyond. These included the Alamo City Dixieland Band, the University of Texas at Austin Jazz Orchestra, the Southwest Missouri State University Jazz Ensemble, The High School for the Visual and Performing Arts jazz band from Houston, the Airmen of Note (an Armed Forces jazz group), Paco Jimenez Band (Tampa, Mexico), Claudio Rosas y Su Orquesta (Tampico, Mexico), and the Ray Barretto Orchestra (Reynosa, Mexico). Such popular local jazz vocalists as Horace Ogryb, Jewell King, Wanda Gregory, Corolyn Blanchard, Bu Pleasant, Jimmie Davis, Fattburger, Jimmy Ford, and Richard Elliot also performed at the Texas Jazz Festival.

Dozens of musicians performed regularly at the Texas Jazz Festival over the decades, and a significant number of these were Mexican Americans. Some of the “regulars” were Chester Fuqua and his band and Tony Campie. Among the Mexican-American regulars were Beto Garcia and the Texas Jazz Festival...
The incorporation of the TJFS proved crucial for the survival and growth of the Texas Jazz Festival. The TJFS provided a mechanism for promoting jazz in the Corpus Christi area and for raising money to fund the festival on an ongoing basis. Once established, the society successfully organized and managed the annual Texas Jazz Festival, as well as other events held throughout the city.

The TJFS accomplished its second major goal in late 1999, which was establishing a permanent location for the Texas Jazz Festival. From its origins as a jazz concert at Del Mar College, the festival moved from one venue to another between 1961 and 1999. The first three concerts in 1959 and 1960 were held in two different locations at Del Mar College. In 1961 and 1962, the festivals took place at the city’s T-Heads, a popular tourist spot on the Corpus Christi Marina. In 1963, the Texas Jazz Festival moved to the Memorial Coliseum, a large indoor facility located on the Corpus Christi Bayfront. The Coliseum was home to the festival for the following 24 years. In 1988, the festival relocated to the new Watergarden of the Bayfront Plaza Convention Center, a beautiful pavilion next to the Corpus Christi Convention Center. The festival remained there for several years until the city passed an ordinance forbidding large festivals on its grounds. In 1994, the festival returned to Memorial Coliseum, where it remained until 1997.

In 1998, the Texas Jazz Festival finally found a permanent home at Heritage Park in downtown Corpus Christi. The site of 12 historic Victorian houses preserved from Corpus Christi’s early years, Heritage Park features an award-winning community center that provides a variety of programs throughout the year showcasing the artistic and cultural diversity of South Texas. Heritage Park has provided a beautiful and highly functional setting for the long-term relocation and expansion of the festival.

Over the years, the Texas Jazz Festival has expanded its list of activities and attracted ever larger crowds. It grew from a one-day festival with a single stage in 1961 to a three-day event with three stages by 1988. Attendance increased from around 300 in 1961 to over 17,000 in 1987. With its 1987 move from the Coliseum to the Watergarden of the Bayfront Plaza Convention Center, the TJF also began providing continuous entertainment at different venues throughout the city, featuring as many as 24 jazz groups performing for free. Organizers also decided to move the festival from July to the cooler month of October, as a way of attracting more people. Throughout the 1990s, the Texas Jazz Festival continued to grow in size and popularity. In 1993, for instance, some 43 bands participated in the 33rd Annual Festival, including Beto y los Fairlanes and Flak Johnson. The following year, the Festival moved back to the Coliseum, where performers included prominent saxophonist Kirk Whalum, legendary drummer Louis Bellson, and renowned trumpeter Marvin Stamm. It was around this time that organizers added a third stage in order to accommodate growing crowds and an increasing influx of tourists.

During the early twenty-first century, the number of bands performing surpassed 50. Organizers also added more food options and more arts and crafts vendors, and the scope of activities expanded to include jazz cruises, jazz masses, and jazz workshops. This helped increase attendance to over 45,000 by 2002.

The Jazz Mass, 1973-2013

One of the most unique and popular events to grow out of the Texas Jazz Festival has been the Jazz Mass. Beto Garcia and Eddie Olivares had always believed that the music they loved—jazz—was a “gift” from God, for which they should demonstrate their gratitude through religious celebration. Consequently, they decided to start a “jazz mass” in 1976, which Olivares explained would be “a true liturgical celebration of the Roman Catholic Mass. It is prayer, praise and worship.”

The typical Catholic Mass is divided into two parts, the first being instructional with readings from the Bible. The second part takes place after the sermon and is a remembrance of the Last Supper. The jazz mass built on this model but also added music to the service. “We are not free to do just anything we want,” Olivares noted, however “the musicians are professional musicians and the music played is appropriate to the order of the Mass.”

The Jazz Mass was first performed as a Christmas Midnight Mass in 1973 at Holy Cross Church, a small Catholic church located in the northern part of the city. The majority of those attending the church were working-class African Americans. The use of jazz in the Catholic Mass made this event unique. “The spirituality of the Mass is upbeat, which is a little different for a Catholic Mass,” said Marsha Hardeman, a member of the Holy Cross Church and co-director of its choir for many decades. According to Hardeman, the Jazz Mass was very uplifting and participants found the Mass to be a joyful experience.

Anne Dudson, a parishioner at Holy Cross Church, initiated this effort to have a jazz mass in the early 1970s. She approached Pastor Father Jerome Capone from Holy Cross Church and told him that a jazz mass might lead to a more meaningful and stirring liturgy. Father Capone agreed and asked Eddie Olivares to lead a Christmas performance of Father Clarence Rivers’s mass titled “Mass for the...
Brotherhood of Man.71 Rivers’s work was a jazz-inspired musical composition that integrated religious chants, hymns and sacred songs with jazz, gospel, and Negro spirituals.72 Olivares agreed to do this and helped form a choir made up of parishioners, which he directed and invited some friends to play, including pianist Lloyd Whiteley and Beto Garcia.73 The jazz mass enjoyed tremendous success that evening and soon led to a significant increase in Sunday attendance at Holy Cross Church. Choir co-director, Marsha Hardeman, was “just a kid” in 1975, when she sang in the first Jazz Mass.74 As she later recalled, “It was like one big happy family …. Back then the parish was thriving and people would come from all over the city to worship.”75 As a result, she says, “we became more multiracial.”76 In 1975, after another performance of the “Brotherhood of Man” at the Front Porch, a special events stage at the Corpus Christi Museum, the South Christian Church, the Greenwood Public Library, the Wesley Methodist Church, and other Catholic churches in the area. On Sunday, October 23, 1977, the choir sang the Jazz Mass at the Corpus Christi Museum, with nearly 100 people in attendance. A few jazz musicians, including Eddie Olivares, accompanied the choir. The performers sat on the museum’s stage, which resembled the front porch of a nineteenth-century home. As one journalist reported, those artists who performed with the choir “increased the feeling of a neighborhood festival by melting into the crowd after the Mass.”77 In 1978, the choir presented Rivers’s mass in at least two different locations. The first took place at the Front Porch on February 21, while the second occurred at Holy Cross Church on Sunday, July 11, with Pastor Meaney presiding. On this day, the choir sang, and a jazz combo comprised of Beto Garcia on drums, Eddie Olivares on trumpet, Bobby Garcia on piano, and Paul Ross on saxophone, performed. Ruby Melton and Eddie Olivares directed the group.78 In the years to come, the Jazz Mass became increasingly popular. Prominent musicians from across the country heard about it and wanted to participate. In addition to some of the Texas Jazz Festival founders already mentioned, renowned Austin saxophonist Tony Campise, Charlie Prause, and vocalist Horace Grigby, both from Houston, and Carolyn Blanchard played at the Jazz Mass. Other well-known artists who performed included Clark Terry, Frank Rosolino, and Louis Bellson. Erin Wright, a popular bass player from Houston, said that she stopped “hanging out” with other musicians after the Saturday night festival performances so that she would not miss the Sunday morning mass. Wright attended several of the masses and eventually performed in the 1995 Jazz Mass.79 Other parishes throughout Corpus Christi invited the choir and jazz musicians to play in their churches. In order to accommodate all of these requests, the mass moved to different locations around the city. Between 1975 and 2012, it was performed at Holy Cross Church, Corpus Christi Cathedral, St. Patricks’ Church (1986), Watergarden Bayfront Convention Center Plaza, Memorial Coliseum, Del Mar College, and Most Precious Blood Catholic Church. (See Appendix A for the various locations of Jazz Mass performances.)

The Jazz Mass also was performed at Corpus Christi Cathedral on special occasions. For example, in 1979, Mary Lou Williams agreed to come to the Jazz Festival and perform her mass. With an American jazz pianist, composer, and arranger who wrote, arranged, and recorded hundreds of songs. One of her recordings, Music for Peace, came to be known as “Mary Lou’s Mass.” Williams rehearsed with the choir at Holy Cross, but, in order to accommodate the crowd that was expected, the mass took place at the larger Corpus Christi Cathedral. Williams hoped to return to Corpus Christi to perform her mass at Holy Cross, but she died in 1981 before she could fulfill that wish. In 1983, the Jazz Mass again moved from Holy Cross Church to Corpus Christi Cathedral for another special occasion. In this case, Charlie Prause, a Houston jazz musician, had composed what he called “The Mass of Corpus Christi.” He performed the mass with an orchestra made up of trumpet, trombone, French horn, tuba, tympanic, chimes, saxophone, flute, and a variety of percussion. Prause’s “Mass of Corpus Christi” was very successful, drawing a large and enthusiastic crowd.

In 1985, the Jazz Mass returned to Holy Cross Church. Along with his wife, Ginny, Bob McAlififfe, a well-known jazz musician who was suffering from terminal cancer, wrote a new mass for Corpus Christi. Bu Pleasant, a renowned jazz pianist, performed the McAlififfe “Mass of Faith” to a large audience.7979 To accommodate the overflow crowd, organizers set up a closed circuit television to broadcast the mass as it was being performed to the nearby parish hall.80 In 1993, Father Frank J. Coco, a Jesuit retreat master and jazz clarinetist stationed in Louisiana, celebrated the Jazz Mass for the first time. Father Coco began to play the clarinet and saxophone at age 13 during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Four years later, he joined the priesthood and entered the Jesuit Seminary in Grand Coteau, Louisiana. In the 1960s, he met the jazz clarinetist, Pete Fountain, at the bandleader’s Bourbon Street club in New Orleans. Fountain invited him to play and was very impressed with his musical skills. “If the ‘Jesuit Jazzman’ had not chosen the priesthood,” Fountain noted, “he would have been a professional musician.”81 From 1993 until his death in 2006, Father Coco celebrated or assisted in celebrating the Jazz Mass, always closing the service with his rendition of the hymn, “Just a Closer Walk With Thee.” Father Coco was eventually named the official Chaplain of the Texas Jazz Festival Society.82

Conclusion

Texas-Mexican musicians have always drawn from a broad array of influences to shape their own music. As shown in this essay, jazz has also been an important part of the musical repertoire of Tejano musicians. This brief history has highlighted the important role that Tejanos have played in founding and perpetuating one of the most popular musical festivals in the state over the past 50 years—the Texas Jazz Festival. By helping to create and popularize this festival, Tejanos contributed in their own distinct ways to shaping the contours and content of jazz in the Lone Star State. Texas artists, i.e., jazz infused with Latin rhythms, grew in popularity as a result of Tejano participation in this festival, ultimately adding to the complex mosaic of ethnic musical styles found in Texas.83 This case study is more than simply a history of a musical festival. It is also about the vital role that Tejanos have played in shaping Texas music and a reminder of how the many contributions made by Tejanos to Texas music are often overlooked or under-recognized. This article also highlights the long-standing willingness among Tejanos to embrace other musical styles, incorporate their own influences, and, in the process, reshape the entire musical landscape of the American Southwest.
Celebrant: Bishop Roberto Gonzalvez, newly appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Corpus Christi.
The Opening Mass was celebrated at Corpus Christi.

Memorial Coliseum
Bishop Roberto Gonzalvez returned to celebrate the mass.

Coke Park Amphitheater
Celebrant: Father Coco, with Msgr. Higgins, now pastor of Holy Cross Church, co-celebrant.

Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza
Celebrant: Father Coco with Msgr. Higgins, pastor of Holy Cross Church, co-celebrant.

Bayfront Convention Center Plaza
Celebrant: Father Coco with Msgr. Higgins, pastor of Holy Cross Church, co-celebrant. The TJSF did not co-sponsor the Jazz Mass as it had in recent years.

Location: Bayfront Plaza Convention Center
Celebrant: Rev. Coco & Monsignor Patrick Higgins
Singers: Jazz Mass Choir, directed by Eddie Olivares; guest director: Johny Cavasos; assistant director: Marsha Handelman.

2001 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

2002 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

2003 Del Mar College, Richardson Auditorium

2004 Most Precious Blood Church

2005 Most Precious Blood Church

2006 Most Precious Blood Church

2007 Most Precious Blood Church

2008 Most Precious Blood Church

2009 Most Precious Blood Church

2010 Most Precious Blood Church

Location: Del Mar College, Richardson Auditorium

Location: Bayfront Plaza Convention Center

Celebrant: Monsignor Reger Smith of St. Patrick Church, Frank Martinez, chaplain, Christina Spohn Health System, guest speaker

Celebrant: Bishop James Tamayo, Auxiliary Bishop of Galveston-Houston.

Appendix A: Locations of Various Jazz Mass Performances

1973 Christmas Midnight Mass, Holy Cross Church
1974 Christmas Morning Mass, Holy Cross Church
1975 Sunday, Holy Cross Church
Father Thomas Meeaney, its pastor, was the celebrant.

CC Intermontinational Choir formed, Dir. Eddie Olivares, assisted by Ruby Melton for one year.

1976 Holy Cross Plaza
1977 Holy Cross*
1978 Holy Cross*
1979 Corpus Christi Cathedral
Mary Lou Williams performs Mary Lou’s Mass

1980 Holy Cross*
1981 Holy Cross*
1982 Holy Cross*
1983 Corpus Christi Cathedral
Charlie Prass performs Mass of Corpus Christi with brass choir.

1984 Holy Cross Plaza
1985 Holy Cross Plaza
Bob McAuliffe’s Mass of Faith performed with Bob Russell, a renowned jazz pianist. A closed circuit television picture of the mass was transmitted to the nearby parish hall.

St. Patrick’s Church (NEW LOCATION WINN PARISH)
St. Patrick’s pastor Msgr. Patrick Higgins was Celebrant.

1987 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

1988 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

1989 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

Celestion: Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D.,


from years of Holy Cross Church
Celebrant: Rev. Wolfgang Mims (Victoria), Msgr. Robert Freeman, pastor, Holy Cross Church at the same time, co-celebrant.

1990 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

1991 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

1992 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

1993 Watergarden, Bayfront Plaza

Celebrant: Father Frank J. Coco, a Jesuit retreat master and jazz clarinetist stationed in Louisiana. He was eventually named the official Chaplain of the TJSF.

1994 Memorial Coliseum

Celebrant: Bishop James Tamayo, Auxiliary Bishop of Galveston-Houston.**

1995 Memorial Coliseum

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Karlos Arcaraz: Biography," http://www.last.fm/music/Luis+Arcaraz/+wiki

CCC-T (accessed on August 15, 2013). See also Gallardo, Latino Blue, manuscript collection, MSS 336.

"Tejano," Garcia, interview by author, June 19, 2013. Another story that helped create a new genre of music known as “Tejano,” which became the basis for dance music and eventually developed into Tejano music, was told by Tejano legend and religious artist Mrs. Delia Ramirez. Mrs. Ramirez, who sang and played the piano, was inspired by Mrs. Pleasant to create music that combined traditional Tejano rhythms with contemporary styles. Through her music, Mrs. Ramirez aimed to bring Tejano music to a wider audience and promote cultural pride within the Tejano community. Her contributions to Tejano music were significant, and her work continues to inspire future generations of Tejano musicians and performers.