

**College of Visual and Performing Arts
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Governor's Awards For Excellence in the Arts

Music Technology

I am pleased to place in nomination the name of Dr. Gene Aitken for the Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts. As an outstanding music educator, musician and artist, Gene Aitken exerts far-reaching and sustained influence in music throughout the world, particularly in the areas of music technology, jazz education, and conducting resulting in his inclusion last year in the International Jazz Educators Hall of Fame. He achieves this influence in a manner that demonstrates excellence and brings a great deal of recognition to the State of Colorado.

In the area of music technology, Dr. Aitken's influence has been felt nationally through his vision of what is to come in the arts. The September 8, 1994, issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, front page, provides recognition of his efforts to advance music to levels not previously addressed. In addition, his work was chronicled in other papers and news media including the *Denver Post*, *Earshot* (Seattle), *Electronic Musician* and many others. He assisted in the development of grants to the National Endowment for the Arts and the Colorado Commission of Higher Education which subsequently funded the Music Technology Center at UNC.

Numerous articles on music technology and how to use it have been written by Dr. Aitken and published in international publications such as *Computer and Music*, and the *IAJE Educator* magazines. Realizing the impact of this individual, the Wenger Corporation in Owatonna, MN ask him to help them design computer workstations to address the needs of the Information Age population. This past February, 1996, the Wenger Corporation came to Greeley to film his comments about music technology, the future of music and how their workstations will facilitate his dream. The infomercial video is distributed internationally at no charge. As a result of his work, Colorado is viewed as a leader in music technology. Dr. Aitken continues to influence the direction of music technology through his writings, workshops and presentations throughout the United States. Gene Aitken was one of nine individuals in the United States selected to write a chapter in a new book titled *Music Technology in the 21st Century*, to be published by the National Education Association. He continues to serve as co-chair of Electronic Music for the International Association of Jazz Educators.

Jazz Education

started in the Northwest in the early 1960s. Today, vocal jazz choirs are in every corner of the world at the secondary and collegiate levels as well as at the professional and community levels. His work was recognized by the *Christian Science Monitor* in the late 1970s. Since that time, he has authored international articles on vocal jazz, and has received international acclaim for his commitment to excellence. In 1986, his vocal group received one of the highest awards offered in music performance, a Grammy Nomination--the only institution of higher education ever to be awarded such a nomination in the vocal jazz area.

The highest national/international award possible for a jazz educator was presented to Dr. Aitken in January, 1995. He is one of only 32 individuals initiated to the International Jazz Educators Hall of Fame, joining illuminaries such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald and others. His award is for the impact he has made and continues to make on jazz education throughout the world. Also during that year, *DOWN BEAT* magazine, one of the most prestigious, recognized Dr. Aitken by awarding him the magazine's Achievement Award for Jazz Education, one of four so recognized.

In addition, in 1994, the Royal Academy of Music in London, England, through a grant from the Winston Churchill Foundation, approved funds for Dr. Graham Collier to visit the United States and study in depth three of the most influential jazz programs in the world that had an impact on the jazz education movement. One of those programs was the internationally acclaimed University of Northern Colorado Jazz Studies Program. The results of this study were published in the 1995 International Association of Schools of Jazz.

Other accolades focusing on the University of Northern Colorado Jazz Studies Program, under the direction of Dr. Gene Aitken, have been the prestigious *DOWN BEAT* magazine awards presented each year to outstanding jazz ensembles and soloists in the United States and Canada. Since the awards inception, the University of Northern Colorado has received more awards than any institution of higher education or secondary education in the United States and Canada. In 1984, the Jazz Studies Program received an award of \$50,000 for Excellence in Education by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

The UNC/Greeley Jazz Festival, which is produced by Dr. Aitken, is now the largest non-competitive jazz festival in the world with more than 250 groups participating from 20 states. The Festival, which serves 4,000 participants at the end of each April, brings artists, students and educators together to learn more about America's only indigenous music. This is an annual event in which the community and the university work together for the benefit of students who come to Greeley from states as far away as California and New York.

Music Business and Conducting

world with more than 2000 jazz compositions and arrangements available for educational, professional and community groups. The proceeds from UNC Jazz Press go to help students in the form of scholarships to music students and equipment needed by the Festival and the Program. Sales are international with some of the top writers in the world having their works published in Greeley (Lennie Niehaus--Clint Eastwood, Alf Clausen--Moonlighting & Simpsons, Dave Grusin--On Golden Pond and many others).

During his tenure at the University of Northern Colorado, Dr. Aitken has produced 26 record albums and CDs featuring UNC students. The works have been featured internationally and have won numerous awards for air play and excellence in production.

In the area of conducting, Gene Aitken is one of the most sought after conductors for All-State ensembles as well as for film scores and professional groups. He has conducted the All-State groups of Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Washington and many others. He conducts studio orchestras for film music on a regular basis, having just completed film scores for *Smuggler's Cove* and *Colorado Gold Rush*. This year Dr. Aitken was selected as the Musical Director and Conductor of the Washington Wind Symphony, one of the few professional wind ensembles in the United States.

Gene Aitken has a clear personal guiding philosophy and a sense of meaning for his music. The music must not be simply something one does for a living or to be noticed, but a natural extension of what the individual feels, knows and wants to communicate. When this essential relationship exists between the artist and his/her art, true 'star' quality is conveyed to the appreciative ear, and the joy of learning and understanding is nurtured. The people with whom he comes in contact, who share his music, are proof of the lasting and far-reaching evidence of his exemplary professional life.

It is a pleasure to invite you to consider this outstanding artist, musician and educator for recognition through the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shirley Howell, Acting Dean
College of Visual and Performing Arts