THE SOCIETY: IN A JAM, AND LOVING IT

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The Acoustical Society of America meetings feature a popular new social function, the ASA Jam. The Jam offers an opportunity for members and their guests to play music in a friendly and improvisational setting, using provided equipment and instruments that are arranged in advance through the generous efforts of dedicated volunteers. The Jam extends the invitation to participate or simply, attend to all Society members and their guests.

The ASA Jam was inspired by noting that most ASA meetings have musical events that are relatively “non-interactive” in nature. These include concerts, demonstrations, and sessions on all aspects of music. Additionally, many members are deeply involved in music-related professions and activities, and many more play musical instruments. However, there are rarely any active-participation musical events.

In anticipation of the ASA Fall 2007 meeting in New Orleans, the birthplace of so many music traditions, styles, genres, and legends, the Technical Committee on Architectural Acoustics (TCAA) appropriately planned for sessions acknowledging this grand musical heritage. The prospect of active participation in a musical event, in the form of a music jam, had been discussed by a few TCAA members for some time. The New Orleans meeting seemed an ideal opportunity for a definitive action. A request was made for an allowance of up to $1,500 during the New Orleans meeting toward a one-night rental of a local music club, sound system equipment, and musical instruments. This request was loosely based on a Technical Initiative model, but without a specific proposal through a technical committee. Befitting the New Orleans traditions, the intended musical styles were a bit different from most of the classical and opera music that had been the typical focus of many TCAA/ASA presentations—it promoted popular improvisational genres of rock, jazz, and blues. This was a new and unique function for the Society—all for a relatively-small financial outlay. It would require careful planning and effort to arrange and promote, while accommodating all possible concerns for member access and safety.

With good fortune, there was solid support from members of the Society who valued the positive benefits of a new social-interaction paradigm for networking, personal bonding, excitement about attending meetings, student and new member outreach, potential for student/experienced-member interaction, refreshment of the image of the Society, and fun. It was noted that the middle word in the name of ASA is Society (Fig. 1).
Society. All reports were of another highly successful Jam, with renewed enthusiasm for future Jams.

During and subsequent to the Portland ASA meeting, the concept of the Jam was taken up by several parties and committees, including the College of Fellows Steering Committee. Discussions continued through the following year, with ongoing support from the Society. The consensus was that the Jam provided clear value to the Society as a whole, and at a minimal cost.

Subsequently, support and monies were allocated by the Meetings Committee for the next ASA Jam in Baltimore in April 2010. This action relieved the TCAA from requesting Technical Initiative support for the Jam, and underscored that this is an ASA function on behalf of the entire Society.

Kenny Good made all arrangements for the Baltimore meeting. The Jam was held in the hotel lounge, Kozmo’s, on Wednesday evening, 21 April 2010. Final costs were $762.50, well below the $1,500 allocation—in large part because of another minimum guarantee arrangement with Kozmo’s and adroit negotiations with local sound system and instrument rental companies, as well as some donations and contributions arranged by Kenny. Of interest is that the Student Outing for that night was to the Jam. Once again, the Jam was extremely well attended by an enthusiastic crowd.

Thanks to all who have supported and worked so hard to initiate, promote, establish, organize, and participate in these Jams. Special thanks to Dave Woolworth, Tom Lepage, Pam Harght, and Kenny Good for the amount of time, effort, and personal contributions each contributed into making their Jam a success.

We are planning for the next Jam already. It will take place at the Seattle meeting in May 2011. BE THERE!