

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).

“The Acoustical Society of America meetings feature a popular new social function—the ASA Jam.”

The first “TCAA Jam” was arranged by David Woolworth and was held at One Eyed Jacks in New Orleans, an established nightclub within walking distance of the meeting hotel, on Monday evening, 27 November 2007. The \$1,500 allocation was spent for the nightclub rental, including the sound system and musical instruments. This TCAA Jam,

with nearly constant live music, was well attended by ASA members of all ages and from most of the technical committees. Music ranged from rock to jazz to blues. All feedback spoke of great success and enthusiasm for future jams.

At the Paris TCAA meeting (1 July 2008), a formal Technical Initiative was proposed and unanimously passed for the subsequent Miami meeting (November 2008) based on the New Orleans Jam model. However, due to a variety of challenges, the Miami Jam did not materialize.

At the Miami TCAA meeting (11 November 2008), a new Technical Initiative for \$1,500 for a TCAA Jam in Portland was discussed and passed.

The second TCAA Jam was arranged by Tom LePage, and was held in Portland at the meeting hotel bar/restaurant on Tuesday evening, 19 May 2009, complete with sound system and musical instruments (most of which were generously provided by Tom). The \$1,500 allocation was to be used for rental and transportation of sound equipment and instruments, as well as a guarantee to the bar/restaurant against a minimum of food and drink sales. Because sales significantly exceeded the minimum, funds were only spent for equipment and instruments, roughly in the amount of \$750. The Jam was extremely well attended by ASA members coming from a wide range of ages and technical committees. The bar/restaurant was at full capacity, the music was lively and varied with a rotating lineup of players, and enthusiasm for future jams was renewed with vigor.

At the Portland meeting, the TCAA again voted in favor of a Technical Initiative in the amount of \$1,500 for a TCAA Jam at the forthcoming San Antonio meeting (October 2009).

For the San Antonio meeting, Pam Hargett attempted to arrange for a venue near the ASA meeting hotel with appropriate accessibility and features, based on the guaranteed-minimum model of the Portland hotel. Unfortunately, no satisfactory arrangements could be achieved with any of the nearby clubs. Therefore the third TCAA Jam was held in a meeting room of the hotel on Monday evening, 26 October 2009. A portion of the allocated funds was spent on equipment rental, in the amount of \$550, with costs kept low through some generous donations arranged by Pam. The meeting room was available without further costs to the

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.

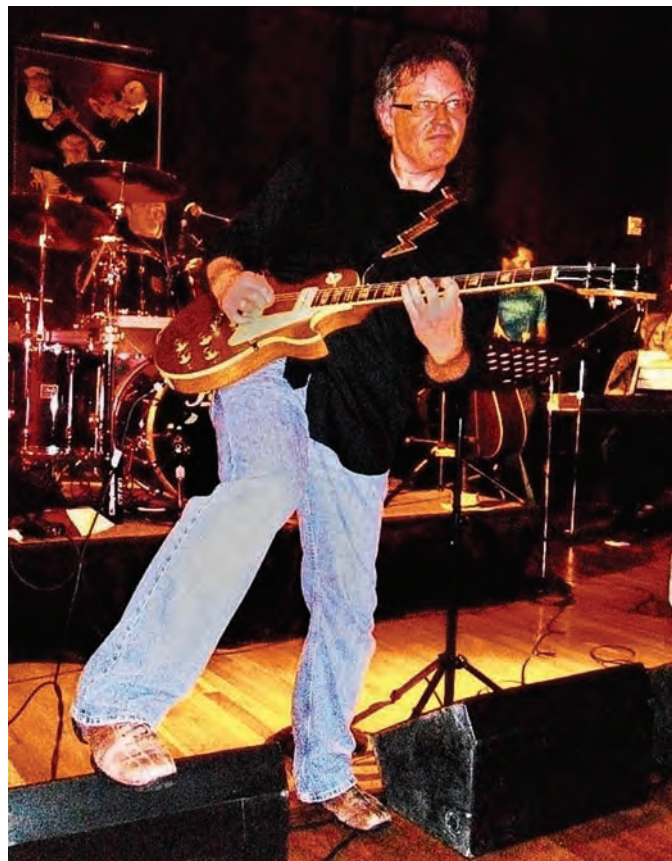
Subsequently, support and monies were allocated by the Meetings Committee for the next ASA Jam in Baltimore in April 2010. This action relieved the TCAA from requesting Technical Initiative support for the Jam, and underscored that this is an ASA function on behalf of the entire Society.

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![AT](#)



Tony Hoover is a principal with McKay Conant Hoover, Inc., and has had the good fortune to consult on over 1,700 architectural acoustics projects and to serve as an expert witness from Federal District Court to US Congressional Hearings. He has a B.A. in American Studies from the University of Notre Dame and an M.S. in Acoustics from the Pennsylvania State University. He has served as President of the National Council of Acoustical Consultants, Chair of the ASA Technical Committee on Architectural Acoustics, and Chair of the ASA College of Fellows. He has held a number of faculty positions such as at the Berklee College of Music and the Boston Architectural Center.