

School jazzes up its Black History lesson

By MATT HASSON

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HAVERFORD — Oakmont Elementary School students got in the swing yesterday during the Jazz Assembly. The school's parent-teacher organization organized the informative but fun event to celebrate Black History Month.

Pianist and singer Tamer Tewfik, leader of the Tamer Trio, talked about the history of jazz and explained improvisation, in which a musician embellishes a melody by adding notes and changing the rhythm.

Tewfik said jazz began when African Americans combined their native rhythms with classical music. He noted that pianist Scott Joplin used his classical training to create ragtime in New Orleans in the 1890s. "When he wrote ragtime music, jazz was born," he said.

A handful of kids and one teacher volunteered to play the piano, and Tewfik gave

pens to kids who gave the right answers to questions about jazz.

Bassist Jason Harris gave an improvised rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In" that got the kids — and teachers — clapping and singing along. Drummer Ian Ash provided a slick, snappy beat.

Tewfik did a "scat," in which a vocalist makes sounds to mimic a musical instrument. He "scatted" Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" as kids held cards with pictures depicting lines from the song.

"Imagination is the greatest thing you can ever have," Tewfik reflected.

Fifth-grader Nick Simon said he liked the drums best, adding that the most important lesson he learned was that jazz is rooted in African music.

Jennifer Spaventa, a third-grader, said she liked the piano the most and enjoyed Tewfik's humorous presentation. Fourth-grader Allison Ford, who plays the clarinet, said she appreciated the drums.



Times staff photo by PE

The Tamer Trio had students at the Oakmont Elementary School swinging with a jazz beat during a Black History Month lesson yesterday.