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# Georgia Southern professor makes music with National Youth Orchestra of El Salvador

*JUNE 18, 2007*

When the National Youth Orchestra of El Salvador performs in San Salvador this summer, Georgia Southern's Bill Schmid, associate professor of music and coordinator of the Jazz Studies program, will be on stage, too.

Schmid, who plays and teaches trumpet, is one of a handful of professional musicians invited to play June 27, 28, and 29 for Jazz Sinfonico, a summer performance by the orchestra, at San Salvador's 1,200-seat Teatro Presidente. With several rehearsal days before the concerts, Schmid's week-long visit will give him an opportunity to learn more about this youth orchestra and the culture of this Central American country.

"The orchestra will be performing jazz, a style that is uniquely American, but has spread all over the world" said Schmid. "I am looking forward to performing with and perhaps teaching these student musicians." Schmid's expertise in jazz studies includes big band, jazz improvisation, jazz history, jazz styles and jazz pedagogy. He has performed with a variety of well-known artists including Roger Williams, Barry White, Gladys Knight, B.B. King and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

El Salvador's National Youth Orchestra survives in spite of unrest in the country, according to a recent article in the Santa Barbara (Calif.) Independent. Anna Forgie, a Peace Corp volunteer from Santa Barbara, writes that the orchestra is "a group of 70 students whose ages, educational opportunities, and economic backgrounds are as varied as the instruments they play." With a small collection of instruments, financial support from the government, and an influential board of directors, the orchestra is able to open its doors to any youngster who can prove musical talent and interest.

Forgie sees the orchestra as a social experiment, testing whether or not these young people can use music to bridge the gaps of education and opportunity that are ingrained in their country.

"When they play, these young musicians inhabit their own world," says Forgie. "A world where they are all equal."

"The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador and Delta Airlines are among the sponsors of the concert," said Schmid, "so arrangements for our visit and performance there have been smooth. This will be a tremendous international experience for me."