

# UI ousts artistic director of Jazz Fest

John Clayton replaced Lynn (Doc) Skinner in 2006



John Clayton in 2014

## **Jennifer K Bauer, Lewiston Tribune**

The artistic director of the University of Idaho Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival said he was told his services are no longer needed.

Grammy Award-winning bassist and composer John Clayton has been the face of the annual jazz fest since 2006.

"In speaking with (College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences) Dean Andrew Kersten, I was told that the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival was going to be placed back in the hands of the School of Music and that they would no longer need my services as artistic director," Clayton, on tour in Europe, wrote in an email Tuesday to the Lewiston Tribune. "Currently, the festival has not expressed what my position will be with the festival going forward. I don't imagine they have thoughts in that direction."

Clayton, 65, began performing at the annual February festival in the mid-1990s. In 2006, he was hired to replace Lynn (Doc) Skinner, who retired after 35 years as the festival's artistic and

executive director. Besides being the public face of the festival, Clayton was charged with raising funds, recruiting artists, organizing evening concerts, student competitions, instructional clinics and workshops.

In 2007, Clayton joined former UI President Timothy P. White in accepting a National Medal of Arts for the jazz festival at the White House in Washington, D.C. Artists featured during Clayton's time with the festival included Bobby McFerrin and Taj Mahal. One of the major changes he made to the festival was to wipe out traditional rankings in student competitions, replacing first, second or third place with critiques of performances by experienced judges.

Kersten confirmed Monday the festival's executive director, Steven Remington, was fired earlier this month. He said Clayton remained an employee of the university but would not confirm if Clayton would remain as artistic director going forward.

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