Arts & Entertainment

Music professor inspires success through commitment, passion

Arts & Entertainment Editor

When Virginia Novine-Whittaker began studying music, her reason for choosing the saxophone was a bit unorthodox.

"When I first had to choose an instrument, I thought, 'What can I play that's involved in the most groups so I could be in everything?" Whittaker said. "What would be kind of cool?' And (the saxophone) is it."

Now, Whittaker — an adjunct instructor of music at Elon University — is passing on her love for the saxophone through private instruction for students with all levels of experience. Outside of lessons for music majors, Whittaker said she is happy to take on students who have never played an instrument before.

industry. A number of Elon graduates are now working as band directors and studio musicians. One alumnus is teaching saxophone students in the military.

For Whittaker, though, the study of music has never been about career success. It is about passion

"Musicians have a means of expression that goes beyond words, and people who don't have that wish for it," she said. "That's what grabs me. And I love all the different emotions you can play and all the colors and all the different roles you can take

Whittaker said many students are not accustomed to wearing their hearts on their sleeves, which is practically required of musicians. But with some instruction, she said she believes anyone can learn the art of expression.

Whittaker said the importance of arts education is what drives her to keep teaching.

"It is important on so many levels for someone

to study this," she said. "It's one of the few things that we do that has delayed gratification. It teaches the concept of how wonderful it is to achieve something after you've worked so hard and long for it."



Professor Virginia Novine-Whittaker prepares to teach a private saxophone lesson. Whittaker's office has a number of instruments she has played and taught throughout her time at Elon. This is Whittaker's 20th year teaching music.

You have to live a life that has meaning. You have to live life large, and then you just play it large.

- Virginia Novine-Whittaker, adjunct instructor of music

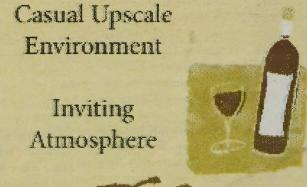
"There's a lot of opportunities for students on campus to get involved in the music department if they're not majors," Whittaker said. "I had a student last semester (who) just always thought saxophone was cool and she wanted to take something that was different. I taught her how to read music. In one semester, we went from her not ever blowing a note on an instrument or reading music, to being able to play some intermediate jazz lines that

sons despite living sounded really good." there with "I just hung in Of course, Whittaker also her, I kept teaching her," offers private instruction to advanced mu-Whittaker said. maone thread that held jors, and many her of For from falling off. students have gone on what (students), this is to procure jobs in the profesdo. We've got sional

"You have to live a life that has meaning," Whittaker said. "You have to live life large, and then you just play it large. I want to be able to share that and teach students how they can get in touch with that part of themselves."

Whittaker's most sincere example of student transformation comes from several years ago, when a struggling high school student, who had run away from home, was still attending her saxophone leson the streets.

> "It was the her some they



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