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Students, legends jam for a cause/New instruments sought for HISD

By Jo Ann Zuniga

Musicians from Tejano accordion legend Flaco Jimenez to Parker Elementary School alto sax player Avery Gillam shared a Super Bowl Main Event stage Friday to promote a project that would bring new instruments to Houston schools.

The nonprofit Texas Music Project hopes to raise \$1 million to provide about 2,000 new instruments to the Houston Independent School District.

Mayor Bill White, a pianist himself, told a shivering crowd of students, parents, and school and state officials of the importance of music.

"Whether you practice for a music career or not," White said, "it gives you skills of abstract reasoning and a lifelong gift to share with others."

Recording artist Beyoncé Knowles is an alum of HISD's Parker Elementary, where she played piano and sang in the choir, her father, Matthew Knowles, told the crowd.

Beyoncé and Jimenez -- both performing in Super Bowl-related events -- will donate songs to two new CDs the Texas Music Project will sell to raise funds for the schools. A CD launched in September featured music from Willie Nelson and 20 others, including Erykah Badu and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

The next CD, to be issued in July, is called *Don't Mess with La Musica de Tejas* and features Jimenez and other Tejano artists. In September, Beyoncé and country singer Clint Black will be on Volume Two of the *Don't Mess with Texas Music* CD.

At Friday's performance, the Sharpstown High School band jammed on *The Funky Cha-Cha* while Parker Elementary musicians kept up the snappy pace with the *Billboard March*.

Many of the students use school instruments that are up to 30 years older than the students, band instructors and parents said.