

INTERNATIONAL JAZZ APPRECIATION MONTH · APRIL 2015

JAZZ AMBASSADORS TRIBUTE 2015

PUTTING IT SIMPLY

A SIMPLE TRIBUTE HOSTED BY
THE AMBASSADOR OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
RUFUS GIFFORD.



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The Jazz Ambassadors Tribute 2015 Flagship Concert

The United States has long celebrated the unique power and resonance of jazz music as a means of connecting people. More than 50 years ago, the Department of State launched a jazz diplomacy effort featuring American musical legend Dizzy Gillespie. Jazz music's uncanny ability to bring diverse people and experiences together, its foundational participatory creativity, and its free celebration of expression helped knock down walls of propaganda and end the Cold War.

It also filled the world with inspiration and elevated our shared aspirations. Jazz – an art form strongly rooted in the African American experience and expressed through gospel music, the blues, the thirty-two bar structure and the flatted fifth – took life, expanded, and evolved as more people came under its spell and added their own voices, styles, and cultural influences.

Today, jazz continues to play an evolutionary role in inspiring the onward development of societies around the world. As President Obama said last month in commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the historic Selma to Montgomery march for Civil Rights: “We know the march is not yet over.” And so it is with jazz. After recent tragic events in Chapel Hill, Paris, Copenhagen, and Tunis have reminded us, we still have many gaps to bridge and much to do. And jazz music must continue its role of connecting people across cultures and generations. The beat goes on.



Project Mission

- 1 Appreciate and celebrate the artistic achievements of the jazz community in Denmark.
- 2 Shine light on U.S./DK relations developed via jazz music.
- 3 Encourage forum discussion re: long term revitalization of the jazz community in Denmark; spark new synergies for development of additional resources which may benefit the industry.
- 4 Conduct jazz-themed outreach programs at gymnasium and elementary school level.
- 5 Develop media content to further continued progress with this initiative.

A telecom, a financial institution, a beverage giant, an airline, and a hotel chain. Everywhere I travel, these 5 actors (or a combination with similar clout) provide the bulk of funding for music/jazz-related festivals and concert activities. There are loads of resources and consequently, this is where the top talent migrates - to perform, interact with local music professionals, conduct outreach with the next generation, etc.

In spite of a skilled talent mass, state of the art facilities, and stable infrastructure, Copenhagen has lost its status on the international jazz map. The city was once known as the 'European Capital of Jazz', but in actuality, this hasn't been the case for roughly 30 years or so. Danes are reluctant to face what is essentially a well-known music business fact.

International talent migrates wherever money and/or favorable resources are accessible. Bonds are created with local talent, which over time is lifted to a level where they can compete internationally, and exploit industry channels created via personal contact, which then help export that local talent. Growth occurs. Artistic as well as economic.

In Denmark, cultural life is essentially state funded. It's a beautiful form of idealism, but with the country's democratic mindset, resources are spread widely and

relatively fairly - which also means thinly. Many good ideas are therefore poorly funded and fail to achieve the intended impact. Disposable income at present constrains the business model of importing talent. When I arrived in Denmark during the early 80's, top international jazz artists guested Copenhagen virtually every week. Now we're down to a handful of top international jazz artists once a year during Copenhagen Jazz Festival.

In my humble, non-scientific yet well-researched opinion, the Danish music industry in general, and jazz in particular, is in desperate need of external resources - along with a far more consistent stream of visiting international talent that doesn't merely fly in, perform, and fly out immediately, but actually stays long enough to create lasting local bonds. A day in the studio. An informal jam session. A masterclass. Or just a chance meeting over a coffee or beer at a local venue.

To create this type of synergy, the community needs access to additional, and external, resources and capital - i.e. non-state and non-music industry.

At the Jazz Ambassadors Tribute 2015 gathering, I'd like to demonstrate this simple principle of resource-infusion by staging an event where the

Danish jazz community is able to (deservedly) celebrate itself in a far more elegant manner than to which it is accustomed, co-funded by the American People and non-music industry Danish corporations who have a vested interest in either jazz or the arts.

Not merely an evening of celebration in the name of Jazz, but also a networking opportunity which I hope will initiate a collective forum of discussion, thereby planting the seeds for regenerative, long term growth for the jazz community.

Bobby Ricketts

Cultural Envoy of the U.S. State Department



With jazz, less is more

In the words of Leonardo da Vinci, “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication”. Had he not been born 400 years before jazz first swung across America, he might well have been referring to its greatest players. Consider, for example, the best-selling jazz album, ever: Kind of Blue. At the age of 32, Miles Davis invited his sextet to New York City’s 30th Street Studio to introduce them – and the world – to a new way of improvising.

Steering away from the intricate harmonies of hard bop, Davis wanted to strip jazz back, to distil it down to its purest essence. When his band members arrived, he handed them pieces of paper on which were written mere sketches: scales, melodic lines, frameworks. It was from these, rather than chords, that they would improvise.

In the liner notes, pianist Bill Evans describes Davis’s ideas as “exquisite in their simplicity”. Without any rehearsal, and over the course of just two days, Kind of Blue was laid down. Since its release on August 17,

1959, between 4.5 and 5 million copies have been sold. Only Louis Armstrong’s sales come anywhere close.

A revolutionary movement in music

The economy of Davis’s approach inspired unadulterated spontaneity and discovery. “When you go this way, you can go on forever,” he said in an interview with writer Nat Hentoff. “It becomes a challenge to see how melodically innovative you can be . . . I think a movement in jazz is beginning away from the conventional strong of chords . . . there will be fewer chords but infinite possibilities as to what to do with them.”

Indeed, ‘modality’ – the technical term for this ingenious improvisation strategy – influenced a myriad of later albums and artists: not only in jazz, but in pop, rock and classical music, too. It is impossible to imagine Coltrane’s My Favourite Things without it, while Pink Floyd cited its impact on The Dark Side of the Moon. ‘[Kind of Blue] is like the Bible

– you just have one in your house,’ quipped famous rapper Q-Tip in 2008 documentary Celebrating a Masterpiece: Kind of Blue.

The old influences the new: Ramsey Lewis, Bobby Ricketts and George Benson

Miles Davis is certainly not the only jazz icon to have recognised that the best music is often the least complex. Renowned bassist Charles Mingus once said, “Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that’s creativity”. And, for saxophonist Paul Desmond, who worked with Dave Brubeck, it was crucial. “The qualities in music that I considered most important – and still do – were beauty, simplicity, originality, discrimination and sincerity,” he explained.

“Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that’s creativity”, Charles Mingus

Today’s jazz giants continue to build on this legacy. Three of the most prominent are pianist Ramsey Lewis, saxophonist Bobby Ricketts and guitarist George Benson. For them, music is not only about creating compelling compositions and unearthing new ways to play, but also about performing with sincerity, and awe-inspiring effortlessness.

Lewis, who was born in Chicago in 1935, has recog-

nised the importance of communicating honestly since he was a child. “I started playing for our Church at nine years old and the whole idea of African American Church is that if the music doesn’t reach out and touch the parishioners, you ain’t done nothin’ yet – if you know what I’m saying,” he says. “That just became a part of my being at nine years old and when I started playing jazz it remained; you gotta reach out and touch.”

Since then, the phenomenal pianist has recorded more than eighty albums, won numerous Grammy Awards and released several hits, including ‘The In Crowd’, ‘Hang on Sloopy’ and ‘Wade in the Water’. More recently, his legacy has been demonstrated on a specially curated album. Titled A Simple Discovery, it’s the fourth CD in a series produced by Aberdeen in association with Jazz FM. Over the course of ten songs, Lewis carries the listener on a sonic adventure through his career, journeying into the realms of jazz, funk, soul and New Orleans. Moving between the gorgeous tones of a Steinway and the undeniably cool sounds of a Fender Rhodes, he includes a selection of his own tunes, as well as a couple of classics from the likes of Stevie Wonder and The Stylistics. There’s also the smash hit ‘Sun Goddess’, featuring Earth, Wind and Fire.

It only takes a few notes to write a great song

Given their popular and intellectual appeal, it is surprising that so many of Lewis’s compositions are based on just a few notes. “Ideas come to me almost all the time,” he explains, “as I’m practising – not only scales and arpeggios, I pull out Chopin, Bach

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and other classical music – and . . . a light goes on. Two or three notes of Bach or three or four notes of Chopin make me think, God, those four notes are great, and there I go; there's a whole song in those three or four notes."

Prolific saxophonist Bobby Ricketts, who is also an international star, understands. He recently took a moment out from his incredibly hectic schedule to compose a track especially for Aberdeen. Titled 'Discovery', it is an infectious, dynamic tune based around –a handful of beautifully composed motifs, in which jazz and classical influences combine.

"[It is] much like an explorer sailing on a journey toward the discovery of new worlds, until the musical expedition ends with the ship returning safely to harbour at its home port," Ricketts says.

Effortless virtuosity

In addition to their radically straightforward yet stunning compositions, Lewis, Ricketts and Benson are also famous for their effortless performances. They make virtuosity seem easy. Logic tells us that there must be hours and hours of practice behind Benson's supersonic

playing speeds. After all, he has been performing since he was seven and holds no fewer than ten Grammy Awards. However, watching him in action, it is not difficult to imagine that he was born with fret boards attached to his fingertips; either that, or he sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads. According to Benson, it is all about heart. "I felt every moment of it," he explains, discussing his album *Inspiration with All About Jazz*. "You can't put together a record like this without putting your heart into it. I got that from Nat King Cole. He put his heart into everything he did." Lewis expresses a similar sentiment. "I think [it's] the love of piano, the love of playing the piano and the love of music in general, along with the love of communicating my music to people," he says.

So, even though jazz musicians may sometimes have a reputation for over-complicating matters, the truth is that the music's best-respected figures are those who understand the power of simplicity. It was this insight that made *Kind of Blue* such a magnetic album and that continues to inform the world's leading players today. Like Davis himself said, "I always listen to what I can leave out".





Ben Webster, Niels Jørgen Steen
and Arvid Meyer recording in 1965

The 2015 Jazz Ambassador Team

Chris Minh Doky

As a young man, the late, great, world-renown Danish jazz bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Petersen (aka NHØP) honed his skills at the legendary Copenhagen jazz club Montmartre, alongside such expat-American jazz greats as Ben Webster, Dexter Gordon, and Kenny Drew, and toured the world with jazz pianist Oscar Petersen.

CMD is in direct musical lineage with NHØP, and represents the next generation of gifted Danish jazz bassists making their mark upon the world of jazz. Ordained in 2010 by Queen Margrethe II of Denmark as a knight in the Order of the Dannebrog for his contributions to the arts.

George Whitty

Grammy-award winning keyboardist George Whitty has spent 20 years playing on the road with the Brecker Brothers, Herbie Hancock, David Sanborn, Richard Bona, Chaka Khan, Sadao Watanabe, and a dozen others, and his resume as a session musician

includes some of the best-selling records of all time: Santana's "Supernatural" (with Dave Matthews), Celine Dion's "Falling Into You" and "These are Special Times", plus more than 100 other CDs.

Bobby Ricketts

Copenhagen, Denmark has always been a haven for expatriate American musicians, sax players in particular. The tradition of honing a distinctive sound in the Danish capital that began with jazz legends such as Ben Webster and Dexter Gordon continues with saxophonist Bobby Ricketts. No stranger to Danish television audiences, Bobby's saxophone sound and music resonates with an audience around the world, and he is considered one of the most exciting, dynamic, contemporary instrumentalists on the international scene today. In recognition of his musical abilities and worldwide reach, Bobby Ricketts was appointed a Cultural Envoy of the U.S. State Dept. in 2010.



Legends. The Campbell brothers - Jimmy to the left and Jonny on saxophone, photographed in Copenhagen 1952.

Ambassador Rufus Gifford

As someone never afraid of a challenge and willing to take risks with a smile, Ambassador Rufus Gifford prides himself on looking to the future, wanting to do his small part to create a world which is more engaged, innovative, modern and secure.

As Ambassador, his mission is to transform a historically great relationship to meet the challenges of the future by engaging Danes – especially younger Danes – on issues that matter.

His three main priorities are enhancing trade and economic opportunity while combating climate change, making the world safer for all through security cooperation, and partnering with Denmark and Greenland in the Arctic region, especially as the United States assumes the Arctic Council Chair in 2015.

The Ambassador firmly believes that Americans and Danes have a lot to learn from each other, and that our partnership has made and will continue to make a positive difference in the world.





Dr. Stephen DeVincent

A veterinary scientist, researcher, wildlife advocate, and diplomat in his own right as the State Department's expert on polar bear conservation, Dr. Stephen DeVincent has long focused his professional and personal energy on the preservation of human rights around the globe, fighting the effects of climate change, and the preservation of wildlife.

Today, he is equally engaged in strengthening the relationship between Danes and Americans as a force for good on global issues. In addition, Dr. DeVincent is always looking to celebrate cultural ties between our two countries and provided the inspiration for tonight's Jazz Ambassadors Tribute 2015 Flagship Concert.

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Crowne Plaza's 360° Venue Catering offers good food with great taste, creative presentations and perfectionist service together with consistent, all-round service and quality. All based on the customer's needs and wishes. The selection follows the seasons and we find inspiration in local and organic ingredients. Sustainability, including animal welfare and organic production are important issues that we take seriously.



Rocket Brewing Company is a brewery in Copenhagen, Denmark. Our mission is to brew sky-high quality beers. To explore and explode the boundaries of the craft beer scene. To go where no brewery has gone before - and to go there with style. Handmade. Forcefully. **We call it manmade beers.**

Follow our voyage on facebook.com/rocketbrewing

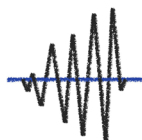


Since 1811, the House of Perrier-Jouët has been renowned for its boutique Champagnes, combining elegance and finesse with 'Belle Epoque' art de vivre. In over two centuries, the signature House style has been under the guardianship of just seven cellar-masters. The result is legendary consistency, shaped by the exceptional quality of its Grand Crus Chardonnay grapes. The avant-garde spirit for which Champagne Perrier-Jouët is known, finds its purest expression in the iconic Anemone bottle of its Prestige Cuvée, 'Belle Epoque', designed in 1902 by Art Nouveau master Emile Gallé.

Founded in 1715, Martell is the oldest major Cognac houses. The same year marked the end of the reign of the 'Sun King', Louis XIV, whose passion for beauty and excellence was inherited by all of France. The flourishing luxury goods-makers found resonance in these values, and craftsmen led the way in the search for perfection. Jean Martell was one such craftsman, adopting the Sun King's values as the foundations for his own Cognac house. From the very start, Jean Martell's insistence on perfection drove him to meticulously monitor every step of the cognac-making process. Throughout its three-hundred-year history, Martell has continually striven to hone its expertise. The result is the creation of a unique cognac that forms the House's legacy today.



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Additional thanks to

Katrine Ring (DJ)
Rasmus Kihlberg (Drums)
Janus Køster-Rasmussen
Gear Guys A/S
Andrea Boel Ricketts (Event Management)
Jonathan Ricketts Lind (Artist Hospitality)
The Third Wave graphics team (layout & design)
Kristian Larsen (Aurehøj Gymnasium)
Christian Bindslev (Langelinieskolen)
M-One Productions
MusicPath.net
festogservice.dk

Julie Groenlund, Philip Holten, and Patrycja Dahl
(U.S. Embassy Staff)

Front page photo

Tenor saxophonist. American Dexter Gordon (1923-90) in
Montmartre in Copenhagen in the 1960's.
Photo: Jan Persson

Thank you for being with us tonight.

Learn more about the Jazz Ambassadors
Tribute 2015

To see more of our Jazz Ambassadors in action and to
continue the journey with us beyond tonight's event,
simply scan the QR-code or visit
[http://denmark.usembassy.gov/news-
events/2015/0410.html](http://denmark.usembassy.gov/news-events/2015/0410.html):



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