

“Kind of Blue”: International Jazz Day

By Marsha Hall

Jazz speaks for life ... This is triumphant music.

Martin Luther King, Berlin Jazz Fest, 1964

To celebrate music is to celebrate life. It is no wonder that Jazz music tells the story of a people beyond the hardships and challenges they faced - the story of Black people across the Diaspora. However, Jazz's universal appeal welcomes a diversity of people across the globe, which is one of the main reasons why, in November 2011, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference officially designated April 30th as International Jazz Day. It is a sustainable partnership by people for the people, culminating in a celebration of a rich cultural legacy of Jazz heritage which emerged from African-American musicians in the early 1930s.

On International Jazz Day, people from all walks of life - musicians, governments, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and private citizens - are involved in its promotion and anyone can learn about Jazz and its history, present and future. The aim is to spread awareness of the importance of Jazz as a teaching tool; a catalyst for intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding; a means of fostering empathy and strengthening global cooperation and communication. As a result, the global artistic movement of Jazz lovers and aficionados is honoured for its contribution to eradicating discrimination, advancing freedom of expression, fostering gender equality, and strengthening the role of youth in enacting social change. This has led to more inclusive societies sharing a common bond over the rhythms and melodies of Jazz.

From a huge range of musicians including the pioneers - Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Thelonius Monk, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan, Bessie Smith, Nina Simone and Etta James to Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis, Shirley Horn, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Diana Krall, Esperanza Spalding and Dianne Reeves, Jazz continues to inspire and impact significantly in modern society. Whether in cafés, music festivals, theatres or on a peaceful evening at home, Jazz has

evolved greatly over time and is arguably the most diverse and imaginative of all musical genres and never fails to capture the mosaic of music, the soundtrack to our lives.

Website Sources:

“International Jazz Day”, <https://hancockinstitute.org/education-program/international-jazz-day/>

“MLK Jr. on Jazz: The Soundtrack of Civil Rights”, <https://sfcu.edu/newsroom/mlk-jr-jazz-soundtrack-civil-rights>

“This is Triumphant Music: MLK on Jazz”, <https://tidal.com/magazine/article/mlk-on-jazz/1-76435>

“UNESCO “International Jazz Day””, <https://www.unesco.org/en/international-jazz-day>

Julian Yang, “The Birth of New Jazz: How Progressive Musical Ideas Influenced Jazz Beyond its Sonic Elements”, <https://ejournals.library.vanderbilt.edu/index.php/UWS/article/view/5119>