



From start to finish, it seemed like a perfect day. Summer weather, happy summer crowds, and – most importantly – lots of jazz to listen to and think about.

International Jazz Day's main event in Istanbul started with an "intainment" at Galatasaray High School, the oldest and most influential school in Turkey. Students jammed into the main auditorium to listen to special guests, including UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock, rock the house with some great music. A couple of them got on the stage themselves to show that playing jazz can just as satisfying as listening to it. Wayne Shorter, the legendary sax player and composer, was awarded the UNESCO Medal of the Five Continents for his lifetime contribution to jazz. His career includes collaborating with Miles Davis in a partnership that pushed the frontiers of the genre, co-founding the jazz fusion band Weather Report and winning more than a few Grammy Awards. Students came away from the event moving to the music, and also thinking about the contribution of jazz to dialogue, tolerance and understanding.

That theme continued at the Day Events around Istanbul. Lots of great music and lots of great

conversation. Hugh Masekela, Marcus Miller, Charlie Gans and Yavuz Baydar talked about jazz and freedom – from perspectives that were formed in South Africa, the United States and the former Soviet Union. Thelonious Monk Jr. spoke about his life and upbringing in jazz, especially growing up with his father and the other jazz legends around him. Three-time Grammy winner Ramsey Lewis and record producer Robert Glasper discussed what makes jazz great and took questions from the crowd. And everywhere there was music – from a special percussion concert to a local jazz trio. "Every single venue was packed," said organizer Mika Shino. "It was beautiful to see how people responded to the idea that jazz is more than great music. It's a force for positive change in the world."

That's the real message of International Jazz Day. At the Press Conference for the Day, Herbie Hancock stated: "Using jazz as a tool, I have faith that this music – either through playing an instrument, learning about its rich cultural history, or listening to the millions of recordings made over the past century – will demonstrate that barriers can be broken, unity can be achieved, new forms of expression can be created, and a dialogue between cultures can begin. From my decades long career as a jazz musician, I know first-hand that inventive ideas can achieve the impossible, transform humanity, and make productive changes at the grass roots level." In Istanbul, he shared that vision with a city that's already known for its cultural tolerance and understanding.

The highlight, of course, was the main concert at Hagia Irene, Istanbul's oldest church (dating back to the fourth century) – a famed performance space and UNESCO World Heritage Site. The sold-out crowd was first entranced by the atmosphere and acoustics of the venue, then blown away by the music. Al Jarreau and Dianne Reeves sang, Terence Blanchard played trumpet, Esperanza Spalding both sang and played bass, and John McLaughlin and Lee Ritenour played guitar, to name just a few of the stars on the stage. "I can't believe it," said one long-time jazz fan in the crowd. "This is like a lifetime of concerts packed into one evening." Martin Luther King III was the concert's special guest. The oldest son of the late Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King is a passionate ambassador for nonviolent social change - just as his parents were. He spoke about jazz as a tool for peace and recalled his father's words at the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1964: "Jazz speaks for life."

"Jazz shows the wealth that rises from diversity," stated UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova. "My gratitude goes to Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and its President, Tom Carter, who made this day possible here and throughout the world. I would also like to thank the Government of Turkey and the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts."

And so the day ended – with lots of satisfied jazz fans – and lots of reasons to think about the contribution of jazz to the world.

Additional links:

- [International Jazz Day 2013 website](#)
- [International Jazz Day photo gallery](#)
- [Watch the International Jazz Day Global Concert](#) (available until 2 May)

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