

International Jazz Day gets a U.S. Congressional send-off on Capitol Hill

UNESCO

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Washington DC, 28 April ' Members of the U.S. Congress crowded into the historic Mansfield Room in the Senate, as the House and Senate came together for a joint reception to celebrate International Jazz Day with UNESCO and the Thelonius Monk Institute, co-organizers of the international day. The global host city this year is Washington, DC, the capital of the United States.

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and legendary jazz great, Herbie Hancock, who brought the idea of International Jazz Day to UNESCO, said this annual event brings a special message to the world. 'Through International Jazz Day, we have brought the language of freedom across the world,' said Hancock in his comments before the members of Congress.'

'Jazz stands for freedom and human dignity,' said Director General Irina Bokova, building on the evening's theme. 'These are the same values we share and we promote at UNESCO. It is about diversity, about us being part of a common humanity, it is about respecting each other.' Jazz unites the world. In this troubled world, we need a unifying force. This is jazz,' she said.'

Among the 30 members of Congress to attend, was Representative Maxine Waters, who echoed the theme of jazz as more than music, saying 'International Jazz Day is more than a celebration, it connects people across this world.'

The Congressional reception was hosted by Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan and Senator Thad Cochran.'

The 5th Annual Celebration of Jazz Day will be celebrated with a star-studded event featuring some of the greats of Jazz in a concert to be hosted by U.S. President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House on 29 April. It will be webcast on International Jazz Day as a one-hour program, 'Jazz at the White House,' on Saturday evening, 30 April, on the United Nations, UNESCO, U.S. State Department and White House websites. In addition to Herbie Hancock, the concert will feature Sting, Aretha Franklin, Hugh Masekela, Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter, Pat Metheny and many others.'

At last count, nearly 150 countries will be hosting Jazz Day events over the next several days.'