



## **EUR on the Scene: International Jazz Day in New Orleans**

**By Ricky Richardson** May 7, 2012

\*New Orleans-Several hundred jazz aficionados got an early jolt to their day during the inaugural International Jazz Day in Congo Square the birthplace of jazz in Louis Armstrong Park, located in historic Fauberg Treme.

The first annual International Jazz Day, April 30th was celebrated with an All-Star concert in New Orleans at sunrise and in New York at sunset. The International Jazz Day was celebrated by millions worldwide. International Jazz Day was presented by UNESCO in partnership with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. International Jazz Day was created to celebrate and recognize jazz music as a universal language of freedom. International Jazz Day hope to encourage and highlight intercultural dialogue and understanding through jazz, America's contribution to the world of music. There is a popular saying "Jazz made in America; celebrated and enjoyed all over the world." It is also fitting that this inaugural event was held in a park name after Louis Armstrong who is and continues to be a worldwide Jazz Ambassador.

The early morning fog burned off as Luther Gray led a group of percussionist for a Ritual drumming as people arrived in the park. Freddi Williams Evans recited a poem Congo Square: African Americans in New Orleans. Harry Shearer served as Master of Ceremonies.

The Treme Brass Band with Dr. Michael White and Kermit Ruffins performed "Canal Street Blues" with a dash of "When the Saints Go Marching In." New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landreau and UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova delivered remarks in honor of the occassion. International Jazz Day will be celebrated every year on April 30, the last day of Jazz Appreciation Month.

International Jazz Day is Herbie Hancock's first major program introduced as a Goodwill Ambassador. International Jazz Day was created to celebrate and recognize jazz music as a universal language of freedom. It is intended to unite communities all over the world to celebrate jazz; its roots, and its impact.

Herbie Hancock led a history-making performance of "Watermelon Man" at the International Jazz Day sunrise concert. Herbie Hancock performed with a talented group of students participating in the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performing Arts High Schools Jazz Program. In a statement made by Herbie Hancock "It is a thrill and very gratifying to perform this morning with four talented young musicians-and to have thousands of students from all over the world join in the band. Wow-I believe this is a musical first."

Herbie Hancock on piano, Miles Berry-tenor saxophone, Glen Hall III-trumpet, Sarah Kuo-bass and drummer Michael L. Mitchell performed an original composition "Watermelon Man," celebrating its 50th Anniversary. "Watermelon Man" was also performed at the same time with students in Cape Town,

South Africa; in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil; and in Paris, France live via satellite. For his next tune, Mr. Hancock was joined by Roland Guerin-bass, Terence Blanchard-trumpet, Dr. Michael White-clarinet, Bill Summers-percussions and Jeff "Tain" Watts on drums. The band played a rousing version of "Night in Tunisia" by Dizzy Gillespie.

Ellis Marsalis and the previous group was featured for the next tune. Mr. Marsalis on piano, was joined by vocalist Stephanie Jordon for "On a Clear Day." Kermit Ruffins-trumpet and Dr. Michael White-clarinet rejoined the group for "On the Sunny Side of the Street" with vocals by Kermit Ruffins.

The Treme Brass Band closed out the show with a medley of songs on a celebratory note. A spontaneous drum circle continued in the park throughout the morning.

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