

Jazz is celebrated by stars of music and film

Jazz was celebrated across America yesterday by cultural icons as diverse as film stars Morgan Freedman and Robert de Niro, soul singer Stevie Wonder and Chinese classical pianist Lang Lang.

The celebrations culminated in a finale International Jazz Day concert, featuring [Lang Lang](#), [Wynton Marsalis](#), Herbie Hancock and [Tony Bennett](#), at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Quincy Jones said: "Jazz is America's only true indigenous art form. It's our classical music, you've got to remember that. It's the heart and soul of American music and we can't afford to let it slip into obscurity."

International Jazz Day was launched in Paris on Friday by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in partnership with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, of which Hancock is chairman.

Monday's events began with a concert in New Orleans featuring Hancock and Wynton Marsalis's 78-year-old pianist father Ellis. Trumpeters Terence Blanchard and [Kermit Ruffins](#), singer Stephanie Jordan and others performed *On the Sunny Side of the Street*. Marsalis added: "Jazz musicians are everywhere. We all know each other."

In the evening, in the setting of the UN headquarters, there were also performances by 91-year-old Cuban percussionist Candido Camero, Chaka Khan, Angelique Kidjo, Robert Cray, Esperanza Spalding and Dee Dee Bridgewater.

The music luminaries were joined by Hollywood stars including Michael Douglas, Freedman and de Niro.

Lang Lang, who has made his name playing with the Vienna Philharmonic and other major global orchestras, said he wanted to help create a "new generation of jazz enthusiasts". Lang Lang added: "For me, my focus is on classic, but I'm a big fan of Herbie Hancock."

"Jazz is something very special, and it belongs to the world," said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova.

There were events in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Japan, Algeria, New Guinea and Russia. Hancock said: "Jazz really touches people's hearts because they can identify and feel the sense of hope and voice of freedom that really comes from jazz. This is what makes it truly international."