

Herbie Hancock tells young musicians in Sydney jazz masterclass to 'be yourself'

By Mark Tobin

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Jazz legend Herbie Hancock imparted his wisdom on those who attended a jazz masterclass at the Sydney Opera House. (ABC News: Bryan Milliss)

Herbie Hancock is not a name known to most school-aged children, but to the students who attended a jazz masterclass at the Sydney Opera House yesterday he is a hero.

The 79-year-old keyboardist had some advice for the dozens of primary and high school students attending the event.

"Copying me is going to take you further away from you expressing yourself," he said.

Hancock — who has won 14 Grammy awards, an Oscar and was part of the acclaimed Miles Davis Quintet — said playing jazz took "a lot of courage ... a lot of heart, because you're not reading [the music]".

"Be yourself — there's only one person in this body and that person is Herbie Hancock," he told the ABC after the class.

"So each person, they need to learn that the goal is not to be the next Miles Davis, or the next Herbie Hancock ... it's to be the best version of themselves that they can be on their instrument."



A young man plays a trumpet during the masterclass. *(ABC News)*

Young Sydney trombonist Rhys Moore took the advice from Hancock and his band to heart.

"It is really cool to see how they approach jazz soloing, they have lots of varieties of licks and little things that they do.

"I think it was really good learning off them and we can take a lot out of it."

Trumpeter Maddie Eneberg said she paid particular attention to the way Hancock interacted with the other musicians and would try to do that when playing in her high school band.

Pymble student Kellen Haynes wants to be a professional musician when he leaves school and he said he learned valuable lessons at the event.

"Try to play to create a feeling, and you need to learn all the technical work and then just forget about it and play."

The masterclass was open to all ages as part of an extensive music education program ahead of International Jazz Day on April 30.