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Turkey to host 'International Jazz Day' this year

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JIMMY HEATH

The second annual International Jazz Day, organized in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue Herbie Hancock and the Turkish culture and foreign ministries, will be hosted this year in Istanbul on April 30.

The event, which will bring together communities, schools and groups from across the world, was announced yesterday at a press conference held at Salon IKS.V.

“A meeting place of global cultures, Istanbul is an ideal location to highlight the extensive influence of jazz. Official celebrations, concerts and educational programs will take place in Istanbul and around the globe, expanding on the tremendous success of last year’s inaugural International Jazz Day,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova in a written statement.

Taken forward in partnership with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, International Jazz Day was adopted by UNESCO member states on the initiative of Hancock, in order to encourage and highlight jazz’s unique power for advancing intercultural dialogue and understanding across the world.

The event is recognized on the official calendars of UNESCO and the United Nations. Its programs and events will be coordinated with all 195 member states of UNESCO. “International Jazz Day is a means to highlight, support and leverage the unifying attributes of music through worldwide celebratory events and activities on April 30 each year,” said Hancock. “On International Jazz Day, jazz is celebrated, studied and performed around the world for 24 hours straight. Collaborations abound among jazz icons, scholars, composers, musicians, dancers, writers and thinkers who embrace the beauty, spirit and principles of jazz, freely sharing experiences and performances in our big cities and in our small towns, all across our seven continents.”

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu and the Culture and Tourism Minister, Ömer Çelik, also issued a written statement. “On this occasion we shall celebrate jazz music not only as a global language of the human soul, but also as that of more inclusive societies, mutually enhancing civilizations and UNESCO ideals.”

Tom Carter, president of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, said, “Last year’s celebration reached more than 1 billion people through educational programs, performances and media coverage. This is a phenomenal figure that we believe will be surpassed in 2013.”

Stars to celebrate jazz

Celebrations in Istanbul will kick off with a special early morning performance for high school students conducted by Hancock, Wayne Shorter and others. The evening concert at Istanbul’s Hagia Irene will feature performances by stellar musicians from around the world, including pianists John Beasley, George Duke, Robert Glasper, Abdullah Ibrahim, Keiko Matsui and Eddie Palmieri; vocalists Al Jarreau, Milton Nascimento and Dianne Reeves; trumpeters Hugh Masekela, Imer Demirer and Christian Scott; bassists James Genus, Marcus Miller and Ben Williams; drummers Terri Lyne Carrington and Vinnie Colaiuta; guitarists Bilal Karaman, John McLaughlin, Lee Ritenour and Joe Louis Walker; saxophonists Dale Barlow, Igor Butman, Jimmy Heath, Wayne Shorter and Liu Yuan; clarinetists Anat Cohen and Hüsnü Şenlendirici; violinist Jean-Luc Ponty; Pedro Martinez on percussion; and other special guests to be announced in the weeks ahead. Beasley will be the event’s musical director.

The concert will be streamed live on the Internet via the UNESCO, U.S. State Department and Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz websites, and will be taped for future broadcast on public television stations around the world.

Besides the Istanbul event, the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz will work with UNESCO and its 195 member states, national commissions, UNESCO networks, UNESCO Associated Schools, universities and institutes, public radio, public television and nongovernmental organizations to organize and promote Jazz Day events worldwide. Libraries, schools, performing arts centers, artists and arts organizations of all disciplines throughout the world will be encouraged to celebrate the day through presentations, concerts and other jazz-focused activities.