

Chicago designated Host City of International Jazz Day 2026

30 April 2025

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock are pleased to announce the designation of Chicago (USA) as host city for the 2026 International Jazz Day World Concert. This edition will mark the 15th anniversary of the event and coincide with the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

"I am delighted to announce that Chicago will host the 2026 International Jazz Day concert. A major hub of this music and art of living for over a century, this legendary American city has seen the birth of so many great names in jazz. And what better way for UNESCO to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America than by making its musical heritage resound around the world?"



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Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General

"I'm excited that Chicago, my hometown, is hosting International Jazz Day 2026. It was in my Chicago high school auditorium that I discovered jazz, an event that sparked a lifelong passion and commitment to this powerful art form. Jazz opened doors to creativity, self-expression and freedom. I hope that this Day will inspire young artists and audiences in the same way that I was inspired during those formative years."

Herbie Hancock, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador

Following the success of the celebrations organized in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) on Wednesday 30 April 2025, the torch has been passed to Chicago to

host the 2026 International Jazz Day "All-Star Global Concert", directed by Herbie Hancock and featuring emblematic jazz figures every year.

For over a century, Chicago has been a jazz mecca. As early as the 1920s, jazz musicians sailed up the Mississippi from New Orleans and found the city to be a creative hub. Jazz legends such as Louis Armstrong, King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton made their names in the city, developing the "Chicago style" of jazz. This style valued solos, improvisation, big band arrangements and a faster, more rhythmic sound, bringing instruments like the saxophone to the fore. Today, Chicago continues to celebrate its heritage through the Chicago Jazz Festival and iconic venues such as the Green Mill and the Jazz Showcase, founded 75 years ago.

For International Jazz Day 2026, Chicago will also host a series of other jazz concerts, educational initiatives, discussions and events for audiences of all ages, in partnership with the Chicago Jazz Alliance, the Ravinia Festival, the City of Chicago, the Illinois Arts Council, the State of Illinois and others.

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About International Jazz Day

Created by UNESCO in 2011, International Jazz Day brings together over 190 countries and communities around the world every year on April 30. It highlights the power of jazz and its role in promoting peace, dialogue between cultures and respect for human dignity.

International Jazz Day is now a global movement, reaching over 2 billion people on every continent every year, through educational initiatives, concerts and awareness-raising activities. Alongside UNESCO, the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz is the main non-profit organization responsible for planning, promoting and organizing the day.

To find out more about International Jazz Day and register events on the official website, visit <https://jazzday.com/> or <https://www.unesco.org/international-jazz-day>.

About UNESCO

With 194 Member States, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization contributes to peace and security by leading multilateral cooperation on education, science, culture, communication and information. Headquartered in Paris, UNESCO has offices in 54 countries and employs over 2300 people. UNESCO oversees more than 2000 World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks; networks of Creative, Learning, Inclusive and Sustainable Cities; and over 13 000 associated schools, university chairs, training and research institutions. Its Director-General is Audrey Azoulay.

More information: <https://www.unesco.org/en>

About the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz

The Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz preserves, perpetuates and expands jazz as a global art form, and utilizes jazz as a means to unite people of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities. The Institute is a nonprofit education organization with a mission to offer the world's most promising young musicians college level training by internationally acclaimed jazz masters and to present public school music education programs for young people around the world.

More information: <https://hancockinstitute.org/>