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Herbie Hancock, Jacob Collier, Dee Dee Bridgewater & More to Celebrate International Jazz Day 2026 in Chicago: Its 'Vibrant Jazz Legacy Runs Deep'

Featuring the traditional All-Star Global Concert, event is marking its 15th anniversary.

By Gail Mitchell
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Herbie Hancock at the Los Angeles red carpet premiere of Hulu's "The 1619 Project" held at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures on January 26, 2023 in Los Angeles, California. Michael Buckner/Variety

Chicago has been chosen as the global host city for International Jazz Day 2026. In tandem with the event's 15th anniversary, a mix of concerts, educational programs and community events will be staged throughout the Windy City from April 1 to May 2.

In keeping with tradition, the annual event will include an All-Star Global Concert. Set for April 30, the concert will be broadcast live globally from the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Led by musical director John Beasley, more than 40 artists will perform. The lineup includes Terence Blanchard, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Jacob Collier, Béla Fleck, Renée Fleming, Robert Glasper,

Gregory Porter, Lizz Wright and Jahari Stampley. Hancock and fellow Chicagoan Kurt Elling will serve as co-artistic directors of the concert with additional artists to be announced in the coming weeks.

This year signals the return of International Jazz Day to the U.S. after 10 years. It was last held stateside in 2016 at the White House with hosts President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, a Chicago native. International Jazz Day 2025 took place in Abu Dhabi.

In a press statement, jazz icon Herbie Hancock said, “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.”

Added Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, “Today is an incredible celebration of an art form that helped shape America’s cultural heartbeat and found one of its greatest homes here in Chicago. Throughout our history, Illinois has been a hub of jazz music where many of the greats performed, made their names and transformed the genre. Jazz is part of the history and cultural lifeblood of Chicago, and I can’t think of a better place to celebrate the genre’s roots and enduring legacy during International Jazz Day.”

Among the legends who’ve played major roles in Chicago’s historic jazz scene are Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, Benny Goodman, Eddie Harris and Sun Ra. The city’s “vibrant jazz legacy runs deep,” commented Mayor Brandon Johnson. “Since the earliest days of the Great Migration, jazz has been interwoven with our city’s cultural fabric and identity. Hosting International Jazz Day in 2026 here in Chicago is a tremendous honor and a powerful testament to the enduring spirit and innovation of our musicians and our passionate jazz community.”

International Jazz Day is being organized in association with the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz. The institute is UNESCO’s designated partner for the annual global event, which was established in 2011 by UNESCO and the United Nations in 2011. Quintin Primo III and Michael Reschke are serving as host city co-chairs; local programming is being developed by the Chicago Jazz Alliance. Find additional details about International Jazz Day 2026 [here](#).