

Goethe hosts Constant Boty for Int. Jazz Day

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Boty (left) and bassist Gaddiel Amoah at the concert

Guitarist Constant Boty knows what he likes to offer whenever he takes to the stage and cheerfully delivers with a sense of comfortable self-assurance that reflects how he has over the years, learned to dress the element called jazz in all kinds of admirable outfits.

The Ivorian-born Ghana-based player was in fine form at a concert at the Goethe-Institut in Accra on May 14 this year to celebrate the 10th anniversary of International Jazz Day.

Backed by Carl Papa Yaw Amoah (keyboards), Gaddiel Amoah (electric bass) and Abraham Adubofour (drums), Boty and his men breezed through some of his compositions, as well as works by acts such as George Gershwin, Bob Cole, Joe Eyison and Weather Report to a small but enthusiastic audience who showed sincere appreciation after every song.

International Jazz Day was initiated by the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) in 2011 to be marked around the globe each year on April 30 to celebrate the role of jazz in encouraging dialogue, combating discrimination and promoting human dignity.

Mrs Ama Serwah Nerquaye-Tetteh, the Secretary-General of the Ghana Commission for UNESCO said at the concert that shows were held worldwide in over 190 countries this year to mark International Jazz Day.

According to her, the 10th anniversary celebration culminated in a huge virtual concert due to Covid-19 in New York with artistes in America and others drawn from over 20 other countries around the world.

Constant Boty

“We actually celebrate International Jazz Day because of the power of jazz to unite. It is the sound of freedom; it carries its own dignity; you do not need to understand the sounds to know that you feel at home and at peace. All over the world, the power of jazz to unite people has been recognised,” Mrs Nerquaye-Tetteh added.

Boty was out of Ghana on April 30 this year but the concert agreement between his management and the Goethe Institut still stood, enabling him to open on May 14 with a mood-setting composition of his called ‘Resilience.’

Shuttling between a solid body and semi-acoustic guitars, Boty and his guys followed up with ‘Summertime,’ a popular jazz standard by American composer and pianist, George Gershwin.

They then played ‘Mr Big (Sambiba)’ from Boty’s 2015 ‘Guru Guru’ album.

“Jazz is a verb. Anytime a jazz musician meets another culture, he conjugates the jazz in the language of the people he meets.”

That was how Boty introduced a segment of the concert that embraced highlife.

It was a moment to shine the spotlight on the other players with him on the stage.

The result was a sprightly rendition of Bob Cole's famous 'Aban Kaba' song with drummer Abraham Adubofour on lead vocals.

After a classical guitar solo, perhaps to show the audience the expanse of his ability on the guitar and another track called 'Venus in Gemini' from the 'Guru Guru' collection, there was more time for the three other players, who all happen to be members of the well-loved West Coast Band, to showboat a bit.

They let loose a medley of inspired Highlife pieces that incorporated Wulomei's 'Meridian' and Joe Eyison's 'Ponko' Abodam.

They showcased rhythms that kept everyone at the venue's feet occupied.

Boty was so delighted he described his colleagues as the "most gifted and open-minded musicians" he knew.

With a track by Weather Report thrown in later, everything on the whole, worked well into Boty's cherished objective of being the jazzman ever keen to blend innovation and tradition.

The opening act at the concert was a brilliant, young multi-instrumentalist called Konu.

He entertained the audience with shakers and the kalimba (thumb piano) to songs in Ewe and English.

Emcee for the event was Paa Kwesi Holdbrook-Smith.

The concert was organised by Mevicon Services.

It was sponsored by Goethe Institut, ADIDAS, White Sands Beach Resort and other partners.