



Are You Ready for a Long Italian Jazz Marathon in NY?

Francesca Giuliani (September 23, 2011)



Italian Jazz Festival at its third annual edition, brings together jazz lovers and students and the best artists from the scene, both Italian and Italian American, who will perform in four exclusive locations in New York City



You might not immediately think so, but the world of Italian jazz music in New York City is a rather interesting and populated one.

Its inhabitants - who can wear Chalk Stripe suits, flamboyant ties, and side-partitioned wet-looking hair with absolute nonchalance - gathered all yesterday evening at the Italian Cultural Institute, on the occasion of the press conference for the festival "Italian Jazz Days 2011," starting on October 1 and wrapping up ten days after, on Columbus Day.

The festival, at its third annual edition, brings together jazz lovers and students and the best artists from the scene, both Italian and Italian American, who will perform in four exclusive locations in New York City (Bar On Fifth at Setai Hotel, Kitano, Smalls Jazz Club, and Dizzy's Club Coca Cola) after the opening event on October 1: an all-day-long jazz marathon featuring piano workshops and an evening-time performance by the Antonio Ciacca Quintet, that will take place at the Ford Piano Factory in Peekskill, in upstate New York.

Antonio Ciacca, pianist and composer, director of programming at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and artist in residence at Bar On Fifth, is the mastermind behind this project, and he moderated the intense debate at the Italian Cultural Institute yesterday night.

Director of the Institute Riccardo Viale, executive producer of the festival, confessed to the audience that thanks to Ciacca he discovered the significant influence of Italians on the New Orleans music scene, back in the day when jazz music was starting to develop as an independent genre.

"Jazz is a global music, and a global phenomenon," Viale said, and a great example of a cultural field in which Americans and Italians could accomplish great things through a constant interchange and dialogue.

Among the many distinguished guests at the conference was Earl John Powell, son of jazz legend Bud Powell, who actually attributes to the 1950s Europe for the birth of jazz as we know it. His dad, who spent a long time playing and getting inspired in Paris, really wanted the world to be John's backyard, John recalls: "Jazz is not a matter of race, it's a matter of culture, of playing wherever and whenever. I think only now jazz is coming back to the USA."

Todd Barkan, four times Grammy Award winning music producer, undisputed authority on the jazz scene and Programming Director at Dizzy's, was also present at the event, fully recovered from a severe car accident he was involved in last February. Italian Jazz Days are "a great occasion to bring people together and celebrate our cultures together without unnecessary divisions," he said, and added: "Jazz is a universal language spoken, understood, and celebrated all over the world."

John Ford, whose family manufactures pianos since 1897, further highlighted the importance of the Italian influence on jazz music since the very beginning.

In fact, it was an Italian man by the name of Bartolomeo Cristofori who in 1698 made it possible for musicians to express their art in a variety of tones, from the pianissimo's levity to the fortissimo's intensity, upgrading the harpsichord to a new standard of perfection. Cristofori had then invented the pianoforte, changing forever the history and the destiny of music.

"Italy was not always acknowledged as such, but it has always been one of the most passionate and longtime supporters of jazz," Ford added. Ford, who will be hosting the first workshops and concerts of the festival in his factory, is also promoting the construction of a 200 seats venue for jazz concerts



and events in Westchester: “building pianos and building musicians is something I really like to do,” he declared.

Italian Jazz Days Festival 2011 benefits from a very promising cooperation with the promoters of Fara Music Festival, one of the most important music events in Italy today.

Artistic director of the festival Enrico Moccia explained the philosophy of Fara Music, a week-long jazz full-immersion taking place in Fara Sabina (a small town in Central Italy with 150 residents) and welcoming students from all over the world to enjoy lessons and concerts by the best artists on the scene. “What we aim at doing in Fara is to maintain a local dimension combining it with a top-notch lineup. The result is that of a unique experience, where excellence is accessible and the enjoyment is authentic.” Fara Music will be in New York during Italian Jazz Days, with a workshop on October 6 at the Collective School of Music and with performances by its artists at Bar On Fifth and Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola.

Log on to <http://www.twinsmusic.it> [2] or to <http://www.c-jam.it> [3] for more information on Italian Jazz Days and to download the program of the Festival.

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