

The world swings from Saint Petersburg on International Jazz Day

Jazz speaks to people from all linguistic, political and economic backgrounds, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said Monday, praising the art form for its ability to promote peace, diversity, and respect for human dignity.

Observed [annually on 30 April](#), the International Day honours the enduring legacy of this musical genre and its power to bring people together.

UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay said the message for freedom “is [rooted at the very core](#)” of jazz music, which is defined by improvisation.

“The ability for musicians to come together and listen, play and exchange artistry through this free-flowing expression reflects the spirit of freedom movements across the world,” she added.

International Jazz Day 2018 kicked off over the weekend in New Orleans, Louisiana, the birthplace of jazz, with a concert in famed Congo Square – site of the first-ever International Jazz Day event.

UNESCO, in partnership with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, presented a special *International Jazz Day Salute to New Orleans* concert that recognized the city’s 300th anniversary.

Affirming the unifying power of jazz, Mr. Hancock and world-renowned New Orleans trumpeter Terence Blanchard led the free event, which featured vocalists Patti Austin, Ledisi and the renowned Preservation All-Stars.

Beginning 18 April, students in New Orleans were also treated to in-school education programmes that explored the origins, development and significance of jazz – with master classes by Mr. Hancock and Mr. Blanchard.

A global celebration

Russia’s first Concert Jazz Band was founded in 1927... and Saint Petersburg, the global host city of the 2018 International Day, has been bee-bopping ever since.

An all-star global performance from the [Mariinsky](#) Theatre will be streamed live as some three dozen jazz heavyweights, representing [14 countries](#), flex their musical muscles.

With Mr. Hancock and Russian jazz saxophonist Igor Butman serving as co-artistic directors, American jazz pianist John Beasley will direct a stellar lineup that includes The Manhattan Transfer (US), Till Brönner (Germany), Fatoumata Diawara (Côte d’Ivoire), Antonio Faraò (Italy), Gilad Hekselman (Israel), Horacio Hernandez (Cuba), Branford Marsalis (US), Moscow

Jazz Orchestra (Russia) and Danilo Pérez (Panama).