

Though jazz is a music very much aware of its own history and often predicated on long-term relationships, you don't often get to see these in action. That is why the appearance of pianist **Irène Schweizer** and drummer **Pierre Favre** (Mar. 10th), two Swiss legends performing at The Stone as part of the Intakt label's Zurich-New York Festival, was so very special. The pair began performing together in the mid '60s and have had infrequent reunions over the decades. But when they sit down to play, it is like an archeological dig, taking an audience right back to the period where experimental European jazz was in its infancy, not the established movement it is today, due in no small part to their efforts. Like their 1990 eponymous Intakt recording, the set was a number of discrete improvised pieces, usually taking on the character of whomever began it but throughout the traditional roles of melodic versus percussive instrument were deliciously blurred. In the simplest of terms, European piano tradition flows from Monk (unlike American Bill Evans-ism) so rhythmic qualities were to the fore of Schweizer's playing while Favre, through years of solo playing, knows how to create and support narrative. Some of the pieces, which ranged from 3 to 10 minutes in the 50-minute set, were jazzy, including the Monk-inspired encore, while others conjured up the bombastic spirit of former trio partner/one-time New York resident Peter Kowald or inhabited the archetypical world of insectile European improvisation. - **Andrey Henkin**



Irène Schweizer & Pierre Favre @ The Stone

No musician performing today is more worthy of the Ellingtonian accolade of "beyond category" than **Herbie Hancock**, as proved by the Grammy Award-winning pianist/composer's Rose Theatre trio concert (Mar. 9th). A master of jazz, pop, fusion and funk, informed by elements of classical, Latin and world musics, Hancock cheerfully strode onto the stage blowing kisses to the full house, joining electric bassist James Genus and drummer Trevor Lawrence, Jr., who had already set the scene playing a powerfully rhythmic vamp. Taking a seat at his trademark Fazioli piano, Hancock let loose a whirlwind of sound from the acoustic instrument to introduce the melody of his "Actual Proof" before turning to a Korg Kronos synthesizer to support vigorous solos by his two younger sidemen. He coaxed voice-like tones from the electric keyboard to open a medley of Lionel Loueke's "Seventeens" and his own "Watermelon Man". Then strapping on a keytar he joined Genus center stage for a rocking dialogue, strutting with vivacity that belied his septuagenarian status. Returning to the Fazioli he played a stirring prelude to "Footprints", his inventions on the Wayne Shorter classic evincing true harmonic genius. The second half found the pianist in an acoustic mode, commencing with a solo improvisation that hinted at "Maiden Voyage" prior to trio explorations of "Speak Like A Child" and "Cantaloupe Island". An electrified "Chameleon" encore had the crowd up and dancing. - **Russ Musto**



Herbie Hancock @ Rose Theatre

Walking through the Metropolitan Museum of Art's amazing Egyptian wing on the way to see **Max Raabe and Palast Orchester** (Mar. 3rd) reminded me of the ending of the film *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy*, when the titular comics turned an Egyptian temple into a slick nightclub. Of course the music the German ensemble plays comes from decades earlier and its humor runs more towards the bon mot rather than slapstick but the same simple enjoyment is there. The group has spent over 25 years presenting the music of Weimar-era Germany, alongside some period American pieces, with a remarkably cohesive mix of authenticity and modern hipness, all devoid of irony. Raabe's amazing range as a vocalist and the crack instrumental team he's assembled (full doubling and tripling horn section; violin, piano, drums, guitar/banjo and acoustic bass/sousaphone) make for something far more compelling than a nostalgia or novelty act. In a multi-cultural, urbane place like New York, many of the audience members knew the foreign fare like "Dort tanzt Lulu". ("A German waltz," said Raabe. "Not as elegant as a waltz from Vienna but much louder.") But the less initiated could revel in spirited versions of "Night and Day", "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" or "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes". Using humor like fellow European large ensemble Willem Breuker's Kollektief, Raabe made these often-overdone standards pulse with fresh energy and maybe make a mummy or two get out of their sarcophagi and dance. (AH)

A fixture on the New York jazz scene during the '80s, the **David Murray Big Band** made some of the most exciting music of that decade, merging the fiery innovations of the enfant terrible saxophonist's original music with the traditions of Ellington and Mingus. Since relocating to France 15 years ago, Murray has rekindled the fiery sound of the unit in various contexts, from boldly swinging to AfroCuban. The large ensemble's latest New York outing, at Iridium Mar. 8th, found it diving into the blues, with James Blood Ulmer's ferocious vocals and gritty guitar sharing the spotlight with the leader, whose son Mingus complemented Blood's deeply rooted dissonances with his own contemporary axe work. Opening with an original arrangement of Willie Dixon's "Dead President Blues", Murray conducted his 16 musicians over the shuffling backbeat of Chris Beck, stepping aside for sax section anchor Alex Harding's lowdown baritone solo. The horns blew a Basie-styled opening salvo on the Howlin' Wolf staple "I'm Sittin' On Top of the World" that found Murray wailing up and down his tenor's extended range around the groaning vocal of Ulmer. Blood's briskly stomping "Talk About Jesus", driven by Jaribu Shahid's funky electric bass, spotlighted the biting alto of Lakecia Benjamin. Ravi Best's plunger-muted trumpet growled one more blues, then surprise guest, talking drummer Abdou Mboup, took the music back to its roots on Kanye West's "Love Lockdown". (RM)

WHAT'S NEWS

Newly minted UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock has named Apr. 30th as "**International Jazz Day**", a celebration to be held annually, "intended to bring together communities, schools and other groups the world over to celebrate and learn more about the art of jazz, its roots and its impact, and to highlight its important role as a means of communication that transcends differences." Festivities for this inaugural event will include concerts in New Orleans Congo Square, the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York. For more information, visit unesco.org/days/jazzday.

A fundraiser for **Clark Terry**, co-produced by Terry's wife Gwen, the Duke Ellington Society, International Women in Jazz, Jazz Foundation of America and Saint Peter's Church, will be held at Saint Peter's Apr. 23rd to help defray the trumpeter's major medical bills. For more information, visit saintpeters.org/events.

To support its **Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute (JCOI)**, The Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University was awarded a \$120,000 grant from The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Continuing Innovation program. For the 2012-13 JCOI, UCLA's Herb Alpert School of Music will serve as an additional educational partner, expanding the program to both New York City and Los Angeles. Phase 1 will take place Aug. 7th-11th at UCLA while Phase 2 will be readings April-June 2013 with orchestras in California and New York. The deadline for composer applications is Apr. 16th. For more information, visit americancomposers.org/jcoi.

Local 802, the musicians' union, has expanded its efforts to improve pensions for jazz musicians by picketing in front of the city's major jazz clubs and handing out literature on its goals. An official protest was coordinated for Mar. 1st though our correspondent reported little activity at sites he visited. For more information, visit justiceforjazzartists.org.

The **Brussels Jazz Orchestra** won an Oscar for Best Original Filmscore for *The Artist*.

Finalists have been announced for the 17th Annual **Essentially Ellington** High School Jazz Band Competition and Festival to take place in New York, May 4th-6th. Sadly, no local schools were selected. For more information, visit jalc.org/essentiallyellington.

Winner of the **2012 NAACP Image Award** in the category of "Outstanding Jazz Album" is *Guitar Man* - George Benson (Concord). For more information, visit naacpimageawards.net.

Iridium Jazz Club has launched a record label, IridiumLive, to be populated by concert recordings from the club. The inaugural release is *Les Paul Trio And Friends: A Jazz Tribute to Les*, taken from the long-running Monday night series and featuring such guests as Jane Monheit, Stanley Jordan, Bucky Pizzarelli and Nels Cline. For more information, visit iridiumlive.net. In related news, **Smalls Jazz Club** has created the smallsLIVE membership program. Proceeds will go towards increased wages for artists, club expenses and donations to the The Harry Whitaker Foundation, which provides emergency financial relief for jazz musicians in need. For more information, visit smallslive.com.

Violinist and Cryptogramophone label founder **Jeff Gauthier** has been named the Executive Director of The Jazz Bakery in Los Angeles, with duties including development and fundraising and support of the Board's planning and capital campaign for construction of the new center. For more information, visit jazzbakery.com.

Winners of the 2012 **Charles Mingus High School Competition** have been announced. The most local school to be named was Jazz House Kids from Montclair, New Jersey but individual soloist awardees included trumpeter Adam O'Farrill (son of Arturo) of the LaGuardia High School Jazz Sextet. For more information, visit mingusmingusmingus.com.

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