



Preview By Ron Weinstock



Nicholas Payton to appear this year.

5th Annual Duke Ellington Festival Celebrates New Orleans

The Duke Ellington Jazz Festival returns to the Nation’s Capital for its 5th Annual Festival. The Festival is moving from Fall to June, and this year will feature a spectacular celebration of New Orleans with Ellis, Branford, Delfeayo and Jason Marsalis, Terence Blanchard, Irma Thomas, Buckwheat Zydeco, Rebirth Brass Band, Donald Harrison, Nicholas Payton, Bob French’s Original Tuxedo Band, and Harry Connick, Jr., among others. The Festival runs from Friday June 5 to Monday June 15

Charles Fishman, the Festival’s Executive Producer enthusiastically says, “We’re excited to pay tribute to the unique,

rich and diverse musical heritage of New Orleans. We’ll offer two free special performances on The National Mall this year and honor New Orleans’ own musical treasure, pianist/composer/educator Ellis Marsalis, at our annual Jazz Masters concert presented at and in conjunction with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.”

Washington jazz vocalist, Sunny Sumter, the Festival’s Managing Director and director of the Festival’s Education program observed, “We’ve expanded the festival to 11 days from seven days last year, which enables us to include more free and community-based programs, such as two Jazz ‘n Families Fun Days at the Phillips Collection. And we’ve moved the festival permanently to June to have broader appeal to residents and tourists alike, who usually have more flexible schedules in the summer and whose children will be out of school.”

The Duke Ellington Jazz Festival will present about 100 programs at almost 50 venues throughout Washington, bringing jazz to every part of the city and to every level of fan from young to old, artist to student, resident to tourist. With this number of events, it is impossible to go into depth about every performance, but here are some of the highlights and notable concerts.

Friday June 5, the acclaimed Howard University Vocal Ensemble Afro Blue appears at the National Gallery of Arts Sculpture Gallery; the Felix Conteras Trio at the Madison Hotel; a Spoken Word program presented by DC Writers Corp featuring New Orleans own Kalamu ya Salaam will take place at Busboys and Poets; and DC saxophonist Marshall Keys will be at the Bohemian Gardens

Saturday, June 6, will be the first of two Jazz’n’Families Fun Days at the Phillips Collection with Deal Middle School Band, Antonio Parker Quartet, Janelle Gill, Alona Lee and the Reginald Cyntje Trio. Also on that day will be Jazz Piano at the Madison Hotel, with acclaimed pianist Larry Willis. Willis anchored the piano chair as part of Jimmy Cobb’s So What All Stars who performed a Kind of Blue 50 year retrospective at this year’s New Orleans Jazz & Heritage



Bob French

Festival.

Sunday, June 7, the second Jazz'n'Family Fun Day will have a line-up of Felix Contreras Trio, Julian Hipkins, Chuck Redd and the Brian Settles Trio. That same day, drummer and educator Nasar Abadey and the Supernova Chamber Orchestra will be at the Atlas Performing Arts Center. Monday, June 8, the first of several New Orleans on the Potomac programs at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage will feature the New Orleans Funk Party Group, the Revivalists. Other performers in this series include Tony Madruga on Wednesday June 10, and Bob French's Original Tuxedo Band on Friday, June 12. Bob French was a rhythm and blues musician who recorded on many classic New Orleans R&B recordings until his father recruited him to be a member of the Tuxedo Band which French has since assumed leadership of and continues playing classic New Orleans jazz. In addition to being one of New Orleans musical icons, he has regular programs on the widely popular

New Orleans radio station, WWOZ, and has fans listening to WWOZ's internet feed. A couple years ago, he had a marvelous release on Marsalis Music.

Another marvelous show takes place on Wednesday June 10 when Paquito D'Rivera presents Dr. Michael White at the French Embassy. White is one of the leading traditionally oriented clarinet players in the world today, as well as an educator.

Friday June 12, pianist Tony Madruga will be at the Madison Hotel while trumpeter Thad Wilson and Friends will perform a salute to Louis Armstrong at the Bohemian Gardens and The Roy Guzman Quintet will be at Busboy's & Poets.. Bob French's Original Tuxedo Jazz Band will be on the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage.

Saturday June 13 will be the first of two all-day celebrations of New Orleans on the National Mall, which will also take place at the Sylvan Amphitheatre. The concert will feature the Rebirth Brass Band, one of the most celebrated brass bands to emerge out of the Brass Band Revival of the past several decades in New Orleans; Little Freddie King, bringing his downhome blues in a vein similar to the late R.L. Burnside; trumpeter Nicholas Payton, yet another of the many fine trumpeters out of New Orleans to develop a large national audience in the past few decades; traditional jazz from banjo master Don Vappie & the Creole Serenaders and a performance by Terence Blanchard of his acclaimed and very moving composition 'A Tale of God's Will ñ A Requiem for Katrina.' Blanchard is one of the today's acclaimed trumpeters as well as composers. He has collaborated with Spike Lee, providing soundtracks to many of Lee's films. This concert will take place at the Sylvan



Jason Marsalis (right, on vibes) will be performing this year. Here he is seen at New Orleans Jazz Fest with Dr. Michael White (left).



Irma Thomas, seen here at a recent Pocono Blues Festival, will be on stage Sunday, June 14. All photos by Ron Weinstock ©2009

Amphitheatre, on the National Mall, at the footsteps of the Washington Monument. That night, the DC Bass Choir, featuring Michael Bowie, Herman Burney, Jr., and James King will be at Busboys and Poets.

Sunday June 14 will also feature another day of New Orleans on the National Mall at the Sylvan Amphitheatre. Performers include Buckwheat Zydeco, the zydeco legend who is celebrating his 30th Anniversary performing this popular creole musical idiom; Bob French's Original Tuxedo Band; Trombone Shorty, Troy Andrews one of New Orleans most celebrated young musicians who mixes funk and street beats to his impressive trumpet and trombone playing; Donald Harrison, one of New Orleans most prominent jazz saxophonists, and the great New Orleans vocalist, Irma Thomas, Soul Queen of New Orleans, winner of numerous Grammy and Blues Music Awards who was just inducted into the Blues Foundation's Hall of Fame. Another terrific concert of free music at the steps of the Washington Monument.

Monday, June 15, the Festival concludes with Celebrating a Jazz Master: Ellis Marsalis with Ellis, his sons, Branford, Wynton, Delfeayo and Jason, along with Harry Connick Jr., Dr. Billy Taylor, Herlin Riley and Eric Revis. This concert will be at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

In addition to these concerts, there will be Jazz in the Hoods where approximately 33 clubs, restaurants, hotels, and galleries throughout Washington, DC, to offer and promote as many as 80 performances. For example, Blues Alley will be presenting Gil Scott-Heron on June 11-14, while Twins Lounge on June 12 and 13 will be presenting the Marlon Jordan Quartet from New Orleans.

For more information, including a complete Festival schedule, and information on the other associated events and the performers, visit the Festival website at <http://www.dejazzfest.org>.