



OVERVIEW

Throughout the twentieth century, Jazz has both shaped and reflected the construction of national identity. Through jazz, American musicians and their audiences have continually navigated the boundaries of race and region and the divide between high and low culture.

Since its inception in 2012, Jazz & Colors has produced successful programs including Jazz & Colors The Masterworks Edition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, followed most recently by Jazz & Colors in Chicago's Field Stadium.



CELEBRATING JAZZ

Jazz is the first indigenous American style to affect music in the rest of the world. Jazz's many roots are celebrated almost everywhere in the United States. Jazz & Colors celebrated this democratic musical form, understanding that it comes out of communal experiences and is inclusive, not exclusive.

"Jazz music is America's past and potential, summed up and sanctified and accessible to anybody who learns to listen to, feel, and understand it. The music can connect us to our earlier selves and to our better selves-to-come."

— WYNTON MARSALIS

"There are only three things that America will be remembered for 2000 years from now when they study this civilization: The Constitution, Jazz Music, and Baseball. These are the 3 most beautiful things this culture's ever created."

— GERALD EARLY

AMERICAN ESSAYIST AND CULTURE CRITIC

“With 30 Jazz ensembles strategically situated throughout the 778-acre playground, each performing simultaneously for one afternoon for over four hours, Central Park is in essence transformed into a colossal performance art piece. The concept is simple but brilliant; place contemporary jazz ensembles in various locations, give them all the same setlist to perform, and allow visitors to take in this exceptional music for free as they walk around the park.”

JAZZ TIMES



JAZZ & COLORS

“Jazz & Colors has become one of the most anticipated events in a city where quality jazz is never in short supply.”

— JAZZ TIMES

“Jazz and Colors was without precedent, a monumental effort experienced in mostly intimate moments. That’s when jazz and New York are at their best.”

— ARTINFO

“Jazz & Colors, more a transcendentalist experiment than a jazz festival.”

— BEN RATLIFF

THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Presented in the most agreeable setting imaginable.”

— WALL STREET JOURNAL

“Here’s hoping it becomes a regular feature.”

— FEAST OF MUSIC

“A very cool concept.”

— JAZZ TIMES

“The response was overwhelmingly positive.”

— NYT ARTBEAT

“A terrific idea.”

— THE NEW YORKER



"Jazz & Colors is a great advertisement for jazz's diversity, accessibility and its place in New York. It's a fine way to spend a few hours with a child, and a better introduction for them to hip music than any young-people's concert."

**BLU NOTE
LARRY BLUMENTHAL**







“There was a feeling, at closing time, of not having gotten even a fraction of what there was to get. If you’re lucky to have Jazz & Colors happening in your vicinity, go.”

— THE NEW YORK TIMES

“I’ve heard one song from each band and the blend of the visual with the aural is just wonderful. Its a very cool concept.”

— CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE





PETER SHAPIRO

Independent music entrepreneur Peter Shapiro continues to explore a range of passion projects. He has owned and operated renowned venues Brooklyn Bowl, Brooklyn Bowl Las Vegas, Brooklyn Bowl Nashville, Brooklyn Bowl Philadelphia, The Capitol Theatre, Garcia's and Wetlands Preserve.

In 2015, he produced Fare Thee Well: Celebrating 50 Years of the Grateful Dead, at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, CA and Chicago's Soldier Field.

Shapiro founded Lockn', a four-day music and camping festival held in Nelson County, Virginia as well as Jazz & Colors, an experiential music event held in Central Park and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He is the creator of FANS, the immersive live-streaming platform with its innovative "Be in the Stream" feature that allows audiences to tune in and appear alongside the artists. He also originated the Rock and Roll Playhouse, developing the family concert series into a weekly national concert series that takes place in over 25 markets across America. His other endeavors include the IMAX concert films U2 3D and All Access, the Jammy's awards show, the Green Apple Earth Day Festival, and Easy Rider Live.

Shapiro serves as publisher of Relix magazine and sits on the board of a number of civic and charitable organizations, including: The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum, New York Public Radio, and City Parks Foundation.

In 2019, Peter was named Chairman of HeadCount, one of the leading youth voter engagement and participation organizations in America.



REVIEWS

"30 Bands Perform in Jazz & Colors at Central Park"

— NYT, Nate Chinen, 11/11/2012

"30 Intimate Jazz Concerts in One Gigantic Park"

— NPR, Patrick Jarenwattananon, 11/12/2012

"Jazz and Colors Fills Central Park"

— NYT, Ben Ratliff, 11/10/2013

THE NEW YORK TIMES

30 BANDS PERFORM IN JAZZ & COLORS AT CENTRAL PARK

— NATE CHINEN, 11/11/2012

The cornetist Kirk Knuffke was playing music for an idyll at midafternoon on Saturday: “Skating in Central Park,” an elegant waltz composed by John Lewis for the Modern Jazz Quartet. There were no skaters in sight, but the scene felt otherwise right. Mr. Knuffke and his band mates, in winter coats, set up beside a footpath at the park’s northeast corner, facing the glassy surface of the Harlem Meer. A stone’s throw behind them buses moved unhurriedly along Duke Ellington Circle; on an adjacent park bench someone busily filled in Mr. Knuffke’s image on a sketch pad, complete with hat and beard.

It was a moment both delectable and ephemeral, one of the many made possible by [Jazz & Colors](#), which featured 30 groups interpreting the same two sets of standards, at the same time, throughout Central Park. A large-scale performance piece made up of countless small-scale impressions, it was physically impossible to take in as a whole. Musically speaking it yielded the occasional awkwardness, usually as a matter of location or materials. But its overriding success was in creating an atmosphere of festive and serendipitous discovery and making jazz accessible in [every sense of the word](#).

Jazz & Colors [was conceived by Peter Shapiro](#), the jam-band impresario behind Brooklyn Bowl and the newly refurbished Capitol Theater in Port Chester, N.Y. Working with the Central Park Conservancy he and his fellow producers set out to create an active and immersive experience, drawing direct inspiration from “The Gates,” the [monumental public-art project](#) mounted by Christo and Jean-Claude in 2005.

“The Gates” transformed the topography of Central Park, along with its rhythm; Jazz & Colors was a more modest undertaking, designed to mesh peaceably with the park’s regular human ecology. The site-specific work that actually came to mind, as the sound of one band wafted across a tree-lined concourse, was [“Her Long Black Hair,”](#) an intimate, affectingly haunting [audio walk](#) created by Janet Cardiff in 2004.

Where the Christo comparison held was in the choose-your-own-adventure aspect, and the communal emphasis, of the event. During my itinerant sampling of Jazz & Colors, covering about half the bands across the park’s expanse, I kept finding small but cheerfully attentive crowds: at the Dairy, for a nimble quartet led by the saxophonist Jacques Schwartz-Bart; along

the Meer, for a soul-jazz band led by the saxophonist Jason Marshall; on the Bethesda Terrace, for a young quintet sponsored by Jazz at Lincoln Center.

The roster of artists, mostly booked by Brice Rosenbloom, who produces the Winter Jazzfest, covered an admirable diversity of styles, though there was a countervailing force: the identical set lists, lightly skewed toward autumnal standards. The intention was to create some continuity, and sometimes it clicked, as when I left the Naumberg Bandshell and hustled over to Bowling Green Lawn, hearing two versions of the Charles Mingus ballad “Goodbye Pork Pie Hat,” by the Mingus Big Band and the Yes! Trio.

Some groups fared better than others with the repertory, and some used it as a liberal guideline. One commanding post-bop quartet led by the tenor saxophonist J. D. Allen spent a half-hour taking down “Straight No Chaser,” its first tune. (There were eight more songs to check off in that set, and I don’t know how they all made it.) Later I heard the Kevin Hays Trio play a song in the second set that had been intended for the first.

Mr. Hays, [stationed beside a rocky outcrop](#), was

playing a Wurlitzer electric piano — refreshingly, given the day’s preponderance of battery-powered synthesizers — with an introspective focus that bordered on the perverse. Transitioning from “Body and Soul” to “Nature Boy,” he chimed a slow sequence of chords, interspersed with chasms of silence and eventually some trancelike singing. It was stubbornly uningratiating, as evidenced by a smattering of bicyclists who dismounted, waiting to be engaged, and finally took off.

I did too, but only reluctantly, knowing the event’s finale was near. It was “Empire State of Mind,” by Alicia Keys and Jay-Z: an anthem all but tailor made for the ministrations of [Elew](#), the aggressively enterprising pianist formerly known as Eric Lewis.

Playing a grand piano from a standing lunge, Elew approached the song [delicately and then demonstratively](#), with a strobeline staccato and a strong pull of crescendo. By the time he wrapped up, a sizable crowd had gathered; there were shouts for an encore, but he was cautioned against it. A crew was already in place, waiting to break things down and reclaim one corner of the park for nonmusical purposes. Maybe next year.

30 INTIMATE JAZZ CONCERTS IN ONE GIGANTIC PARK

— PATRICK JARENWATTANANON, 11/12/2012

What was Jazz and Colors, the outdoor jazz festival in New York City's Central Park on Saturday afternoon?

The journalist's answer is: a [public art event](#). Thirty different bands each played two sets. They were all spread out throughout the nooks and crannies of Central Park's 843 acres. All the bands were instructed to play the same set lists (see below), making for 30 different interpretations of the same 18 standards. The songs were largely associated with fall and New York City: "Central Park West," "Scrapple From The Apple," "Autumn In New York," etc. It was free and open to the public.

Of course, it was much more than that. To casual attendees — those who simply wandered into the park for a run, or a stroll, or to practice skating moves, or an excursion with friends to the zoo — it was [a pleasant surprise](#). Imagine the serendipity of stumbling upon a high-functioning jazz band on your way to, say, the grocery store. Now imagine that your walk to the grocery store overlooks a backdrop of deciduous trees in fall colors, aligned in magnificent vistas overlooking bodies of water, skyscrapers and other topographic landmarks. There's no context to shout at you, "This is an important band and you should like it!" There are no rules with which to experience it.

For jazz heads, it had much to recommend it, even if it wasn't an ideal way to hear a favorite band. This was an Cool Event, as in a "community happening" or "place for people to hang out," not a

Major International Jazz Festival, even if the talent level was suited for that designation. To enjoy it, you had to keep that in mind. That meant ignoring (lack of) sound mixes, or the background noise of taxis and buses, or a wet bum from sitting on a hillside. It also denied the chance for the composers out there to show off their visions with the pen.

Conversely, it served as [a de facto argument for a standard repertoire](#). These songs still command some recognition (however faint) in the public imagination, and New York's folkloric identity is still tied to swinging versions of, say, "Skating In Central Park" or "I'll Take Manhattan." But not only did it feel appropriate. The jazz community can seem awfully divided at times: uptown vs. downtown, black vs. white, new buzzed-about kids vs. ignored-but-wise veterans, straight-ahead vs. free, and other false dichotomies. Here was a reminder that most everybody comes up on the same tunes, and that they can serve as creative points of departure or unification alike.

So there was saxophonist JD Allen's quartet swinging hard on "A Train" by a flower bed; flutist Jamie Baum exploiting the timbres of her quintet on "Autumn Serenade"; cellist Marika Hughes with violin, bass and guitar jamming on the blues of "Blue Train"; Jason Marshall's baritone-sax-and-organ combo with a much different take on the same song literally across the pond. There was vibraphonist Chris Dingman leading a funk-inflected version of "The Blues Walk" as people

walked up from 110th Street; The Klezmatics doing a, well, klezmer-inspired "Rhythm-A-Ning"; saxophonist Yosvany Terry's virtuosic quintet burning the same chart; the pianist ELEW with bass and drums setting a mellow scene on Ornette Coleman's "Peace"; the Mingus Big Band standing and delivering on their namesake's "Nostalgia In Times Square." They made everyone navigate through Jay-Z and Alicia Keys' hip-hop anthem "Empire State Of Mind." They made everyone play both blues heads and ballads at least twice a set. Young, old; Lincoln Center or Lower East Side: Everyone was equal, and nobody was the same.

It also served as [an example of how resourceful jazz-trained musicians are](#) (and how many of them there are in New York). Creative adaptations were everywhere. When bassist Vicente Archer's solo wasn't loud enough, pianist Kevin Hays stood up and leaned a microphone into the bass, while jabbing at chords on his Wurlitzer. While trumpeter Roy Campbell looked for a parking spot, his keyboard player and drummer kept the music going on "Nature Boy." Lead sheets, impromptu arrangements and unplanned encores were widely seen. There were a lot of battery-powered amplifiers; keyboard synthesizers, nice electric pianos, terrible electric pianos, melodicas, half-finger gloves and other piano-player substitutes; drum kits stripped down to bare essentials of kick, snare and two cymbals — if that. And the natural give-and-take of four musicians acting as their own sound guys: If imperfect, that was actually

preferable to a lot of overamplified jazz you see in clubs and theaters.

One can't discount the novelty of it all either. As most performances weren't far off the six-mile loop which circumnavigates the park's interior, I took my bicycle and circumnavigated the road, catching a song or two here and there by about 20 of the bands. If nothing else, it was [a fun and unusual jaunt](#) on a pleasant fall day, a reminder that so much of the live music experience is in the journey.

Most of all, it was [a reminder of the intimacy of this music](#). To see a group of skilled blues idiom musicians playing familiar material up close — there were few boundaries between audience and performer, other than propriety — voids most intellectual concerns about jazz's egghead-learnedness, or really any other concerns that jazz people talk about when they aren't listening to music. It's often music that prompts a deep visceral reaction, and when you're outside with your dancing toddler, as opposed to a dark and silent concert hall, you see it. There's no substitute for seeing this stuff live and in person, where the phenomena of mysterious rhythm and humans-doing-things-well overcomes so casually and so powerfully. It's an experience that ought to be available often, to more people. And if New York City can come up with the budget, it ought to be back next year — or, in another form, even sooner.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

JAZZ AND COLORS FILLS CENTRAL PARK

— BEN RATLIFF, 11/10/2013

There is a long-running late-August festival in the northern Netherlands called [Zomer Jazz Fietstour](#). It runs 12 hours, features a few dozen bands and takes place in barns and churches spread out around Groningen. You need to bicycle from one to another, and you are given suggested routes based on musical style or region. So idealized, so humane: Only in Europe, right?

No. [Jazz and Colors](#), which had its second annual occurrence on Saturday all over Central Park, is our closest analogy, but New Yorkishly fuller and quicker. It is produced by Peter Shapiro, owner of [Brooklyn Bowl](#) and the Capitol Theater, and booked by Brice Rosenbloom, music director of Le Poisson Rouge and programmer of Winter Jazzfest, among other events. It put more bands in a much smaller space and took a third of the time. It cost nothing to visit, and all the bands were assigned the same set list, mostly standards and songs about New York, with a half-hour free-for-all at the end.

You don't tell a jazz group what to play. But this was more a transcendentalist experiment than a jazz festival. You could hear Arturo O'Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra play a spacious, brass-defined arrangement of Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" at the Naumburg Bandshell, then walk five minutes due west and hear the same song by Brian Charrette's Organ Sextette, funkier and slenderer, with flute and bass clarinet.

The point of Jazz and Colors seems basically sensory: Hear jazz, feel autumn. It is not geared either toward serious cardio-aerobics or comprehending the essence of individual artists. Few of the listeners I saw had the ambitious, agenda-driven, park-devouring look in their eyes. You wouldn't want to try to see all 30 bands. It wasn't feasible.

Reader, I saw 23, with the help of a bike, from Columbus Circle (ELEW and Nature of the Next, with the crowd-stirring pianist Eric

Lewis on a grand piano) to the Harlem Meer (the guitarist and singer Doug Wamble). Most band spots were within sight and hearing of the East or West Drives, with biking lanes. Some were harder to reach, along paths far from an arterial route and surrounded by hills, where only walking is allowed. Jason Kao Hwang occupied one of those; by the time I got to him, he was playing a version of "New York City," by Gil Scott-Heron, stretching out in an electric violin solo with a wah-wah pedal.

The bands played unplugged or with small amplifiers, sometimes with towels over snare drums. These were the acoustics of no acoustics, but some performances stood out, even to someone flying past or stopping only for five minutes. The tenor saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin led a moody slow-jam version of "Cherokee" against perfectly graying skies on the Great Hill. The electric guitarist Mike Baggetta, with the band Yard Byard in the Wild West Playground, played a measured, shimmery,

almost surfy solo that I wanted to take home and study.

And in a short, unannounced set, the former Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh set up with the guitarist Eric Krasno and the drummer Joe Russo. The music sounded casual and friendly but fairly deep from the start: collective soloing in simple ad-lib structures, and for a while on Paul McCartney's "Get Back." Maybe 50 people watched, on a strip just east of the Sheep Meadow called, coincidentally, Dead Road. Among them were a few who weren't holding a Jazz and Colors map, seemed unaware of the event and agnostic about improvised music per se, but who had happened upon a musician they knew and loved, playing through a battery-powered practice amp with his feet on the ground. Their facial expressions came as a series: recognition, shock, bewildered gratitude.

12PM-4PM
JAZZ & COLORS
CENTRAL PARK | 11/9/13
30 BANDS, 30 LOCATIONS, 1 SETLIST.
WILD WEST PLAYGROUND
YARD BY YARD



JAZZ & COLORS