

INSIDE ARTS

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS

A close-up photograph of a man with glasses playing a trumpet. He is wearing a red patterned shirt and a watch. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the man and his instrument.

WHO HEARS JAZZ?

The survey that spurred discussion about a national treasure

ALSO INSIDE:

Alondra de la Parra at the podium

10 Questions for Rocco Landesman

Foster children find a home in theater



Facing

HANS SPERENBRINK

The jazz community takes stock and a hard look at new numbers.

BY LARRY BLUMENFELD

“Can Jazz Be Saved?” critic Terry Teachout asked in his August 9th column in the *Wall Street Journal*.

We knew what that meant. Just the latest pronouncement — there’s a tradition of these dating back several decades — of jazz as dead. Or good as dead. Or very, very sick indeed.

“It’s no longer possible for head-in-the-sand types to pretend that the great American art form is economically healthy,” Teachout continued, “or that its future looks anything but bleak.”

His diagnosis was based upon *Arts Participation 2008*, the fourth such National Endowment for the Arts survey (in partnership with the United States Census Bureau) since 1982. Chiefly, Teachout cited

the Music

the fact that just 7.8 percent of adult Americans had attended a jazz performance last year, down from 10 percent in 2002. And those who did attend were older than in the past — the median age of listeners for live jazz had risen from 29, in 1982, to 46, in 2008. “The audience for jazz in America is both shrinking and aging,” Teachout concluded.

Historian Ted Gioia had sounded an alert a month earlier at the *Jazz.com* website. “Certainly the NEA study only confirms the worst possible interpretation of recent events,” he wrote. “Many of us would like to believe that the current collapse in many long-standing jazz institutions is simply a temporary situation, driven by the overall economic malaise. The NEA study suggests that a more chronic problem exists, and that even a reversal in employment figures and home prices won’t be enough to prop up the dwindling jazz audience.”

But it was Teachout’s piece, in a widely read newspaper (full disclosure: I write for the *Journal*, too) that riled folks up. Enter the bloggers, musicians and critics with responses ranging from dismissive to outraged.

Critic David Adler asked, “If no young people are listening to jazz, why are so many young people playing it all over the world?”

Vijay Iyer

“Jazz has long been a porous genre and the scuffle over its definition was never fought more fiercely than in the years covered by the survey.”

Many saw the survey as highly suspect, especially since the troubling numbers were stimulated by this question: “With the exception of elementary and high school performances, did you go to a live jazz performance in the last 12 months?”

“Maybe the problem is in the false choice of categorization,” mused trumpeter Dave Douglas online. “Ask yourself how many people at a Wayne Shorter Quartet concert consider themselves ‘jazz fans,’ more than just ‘music fans.’”

That was my initial thought, too: Is Eddie Palmieri jazz or salsa? Henry Threadgill jazz or avant-garde music? Does Lionel Loueke play African-tinged jazz or jazz-inflected African music? You may not care about such distinctions, but those counting must.

These and others points were well made in Nate Chinen’s August 19th article in the *New York Times*, which amply summarized the online clamor. “Jazz has long been a porous genre,” he wrote, “and the scuffle over its definition was never fought more fiercely than in the years covered by the survey.” Teachout’s argument hung largely on the notion that jazz, once a popular music, has, especially in the past three decades, become high culture; thus its audience and demographics now more closely resemble those of classical music and opera. Chinen, and others (myself included) buy that logic to only a small degree: Like most music these days, jazz — especially jazz — defies such binaries.



IN THE ONLINE SCUFFLE THAT ENSUED, Teachout seized on the “hard numbers” he had used as opposed to the “anecdotal evidence” offered up by detractors. Howard Mandel, the critic who heads the Jazz Journalists Association, sought to generate enough “anecdotal evidence” to amount to real numbers: He devised a Twitter campaign using the hashtag “#jazzlives.” Online, at, say, the Jazzhouse.com site, you could watch the tweets scroll by:

“Surman Abercrombie Dejohnette Gress tearing it up at Birdland.”

“JoJo’s — 5th & U, NW DC.”

In the first 5 days, the campaign racked up some 500 responses.

By August 28th, Teachout could be heard debating the merits of his arguments with pianist Vijay Iyer on John Schaefer’s WNYC-FM program *Sound Check*.

JIMMY KATZ



Lionel Loueke

“The issue isn’t one of accessibility but one of access,” Iyer said at one point. In an email, he elaborated. “There just aren’t many opportunities to hear live jazz across the country, and furthermore, there are fewer now than there were in 1982. My main point was that the nationwide infrastructure for jazz presenting has shrunk over the years, rather than the jazz audience per se.”

If anything has withered, it’s the loose network of clubs that were long the hothouses for both jazz music and audience.

“People used to ask me where my best audiences were,” pianist Randy Weston told me recently. “I’d be able to tell them — a particular spot in Harlem or Brooklyn or Detroit. But the sorts of rooms that my colleagues and I came up playing — the ones where we could count on the audience and they were counting on us — just don’t exist in this country like they used to.”

Agent Joel Chriss entered the jazz business not long after the first NEA survey. “It was probably the tail end of what was a viable circuit that jazz musicians could play on a regular basis,” he said. “They’d get in a car in New York or Chicago and travel the country playing different rooms each week. Johnny Griffin and Phil Woods and Betty Carter used to tell me stories of packing up and going for six weeks straight. There’s no chance of doing that in the States today.”

Right or wrong, Teachout’s article touched a sensitive nerve among jazz presenters.

“I found it irritating,” said Adrian Ellis, executive director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, the best-funded, highest-profile jazz organization. “It’s clearly uncomfortable data. But this was a headline. Where’s the story? There are all sorts of interesting stories, actually. What is the ecology of jazz? What are the support mechanisms for the music? What has happened to the club scene? What’s the impact of new technology likely to be?”

Precisely these sorts of questions have been considered through a series of roundtable meetings sponsored by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters. That conversation will deepen through a dedicated jazz track at APAP Conference NYC 2010 produced in collaboration with Jazz at Lincoln Center and the



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NEA. The source of those hot-button statistics, the NEA, it should be noted, has done much to broaden jazz’s audience, most notably through its Jazz Masters program. This year’s conference features a public conversation with the new class of Masters on Monday, January 11, and an awards ceremony and concert on the closing night, January 12.



THE NEWLY EMPHATIC FOCUS on jazz at Arts Presenters predates Teachout’s piece. A strategic review conducted by the Roan Group in 2006 and 2007, involving roundtable meetings among arts presenters in eight cities, was the initial stimulus, according to Sandra Gibson, president and CEO of Arts Presenters.

“At every single meeting,” she recalled, “someone got up and said, ‘I think APAP needs to pay more attention to jazz.’ We heard that. And the other thing we realized is that APAP is primarily a network of networks, a convener of conveners. That process — connecting, sharing — is precisely what the jazz community needs.”

The timing couldn’t have been better. In April 2008, the International Association of Jazz Educators, which had a membership of more than 8,000 jazz teachers, musicians, students and music-industry executives representing 35 countries, filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Gone was its annual conference, along with

a vital industry track. IAJE was a placeholder in calendars and a space in which the jazz community could gather en masse, share resources and look for answers to common questions.

Radhika Subramaniam’s report following a *Jazz Think-In* in January 2008, convened by Arts Presenters and the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, begins: “There was a palpable sense of urgency among the participants.” Not a death watch to be sure, but, as she put it, “The field of jazz was perceived to be at a crossroads. Jazz has become a moving signifier, its stylistic changes reflecting societal changes.” Good for the music, perhaps, but all the more difficult for a successful branding campaign.

Sara Donnelly, jazz program officer for MAAF, recalled discussions at the meeting: “There was a strong

feeling that the recording industry had plummeted, and there needed to be new ways for artist to get technical and to utilize technology.” With funding from the Doris Duke Foundation, MAAF



Randy Weston

In June, the National Endowment for the Arts released highlights from the *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, which showed persistent patterns of decline in participation in most art forms. In this issue of *Inside Arts*, Larry Blumenfeld focuses on data pertaining to jazz. However, the survey offers a sobering analysis of national trends in arts and culture organizations – and stimulates lively conversation and healthy argumentation about the arts, about audiences and about surveys. The strength of the SPPA, says Sunil Iyengar, NEA director of research and analysis, is that it involves a “large, nationally representative sample of adult audiences and provides reliable reporting of changes in arts participation over time.” But analysts also face challenges such as defining terminology and explaining behavioral changes. Best of all: The survey is likely to spawn truly important discussion.

For a more detailed report and updated information, visit www.nea.gov.



Vijay Iyer Trio

AMONG THE FINDINGS:

- Attendance at the most popular types of arts events – such as art museums and craft/visual arts festivals – saw notable declines.
- Between 1982 and 2008, attendance at performing arts such as classical music, jazz, opera, ballet, musical theater and dramatic plays has seen double-digit rates of decline.
- Fewer adults are creating and performing art.
- Audiences for jazz and classical music are substantially older than in the 1980s.
- Forty-five to 54-year-olds – historically dependable arts participants – showed the steepest declines in attendance for most art events, compared with other age groups.
- College-educated audiences, including those with advanced degrees and certifications, have curbed their attendance in nearly all art forms.
- Ballet attendance for this group has declined at the sharpest rate – down 43 percent since 1982.
- Less-educated adults have significantly reduced their already low levels of attendance.
- About 70 percent of U.S. adults went online for any purpose in 2008, and of those adults, nearly 40 percent used the Internet to view, listen to, download or post artworks or performances.
- Thirty percent of adults who use the Internet, download, watch or listen to music, theater, or dance performances online at least once a week.
- More Americans view or listen to broadcasts and recordings of arts events than attend them live (live theater being the sole exception).

An NEA *Survey of Outdoor Arts Festivals* is currently underway to learn more about outdoor arts festivals that showcase live events in the U.S. Researchers are hoping for respondents from a broad range of outdoor arts festivals of all sizes and types. To participate, go to: www.festivalsurvey.com and enter the password: GENFEST. FMI: info@SAsurveys.com or 1-888-745-2371.

launched *Jazz.NEXT*, a national initiative designed to encourage a more robust jazz infrastructure through technological means.

One good example is Dave Douglas, who spoke about jazz versus music fans. His Greenleaf Music records several artists and releases DVDs, CDs, MP3s, lossless FLAC files (which are sonically superior to MP3s) and sheet music as well as posters and artwork. Greenleaf’s “bundled packages” of music are infinitely flexible, based on a listener’s desires. The company’s blog follows music events, artists’ thoughts, trivia, music industry ramblings and random links.

In one post titled *Niches Brew: Musicians Creating a Way Forward*, Douglas wrote, "Not to be Pollyanna-ish about it, but new outlets are sprouting everywhere. It's just that they're different than the old outlets."

Without question, the outlets for presenting jazz performances have shifted dramatically to performing arts centers and universities and a host of other nontraditional spaces such as art galleries.

"Jazz is central to the identity of Zankel Hall," Carnegie Hall artistic advisor Ara Guzelimian told me when that hall opened in 2003, "and that's by design." And when Mervon Mehta, formerly vice president of programming and education at the Kimmel

THE JAZZ PROGRAM FOR APAP CONFERENCE NYC 2010

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8

Classical, Jazz, Contemporary, and New Music Forum

9 A.M.-NOON

This pre-conference forum will focus on innovative strategies for engaging audiences, whether through programming, marketing, revenue streams or other strategies. The session will bring together jazz, classical and contemporary artists, presenters and producers whose innovations have led audiences to listen to music in new ways and in new places. It's an opportunity for participants to develop insight about the role of artists, producers and presenters in developing and sustaining audiences based on new trends and opportunities in the musical arts marketplace.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9

TRACK I: ARTISTS AT THE CORE

9-10:50 A.M.

IB. Jazz in the 21st Century - America's Expanding Legacy

9 A.M.-NOON

Feel the rhythm of the most rapidly changing movement in music today: the renaissance of jazz in America and expanding global connections. This session brings together intergenerational artists, agents, managers, presenters and producers in the process of re-imagining and synthesizing America's gift to the music world. The dialogue will include NEA Jazz Masters, established younger artists and emerging artists.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10

TRACK II: PARTICIPANT POWERED EXPERIENCE

9-11:45 A.M.

IIB. Got Jazz? A New Age of Audience Enlightenment

Discover how leading artists, presenters, agents, managers and producers are creating entry points for audiences of all ages to experience jazz. This session will explore new educational programs and resources that have been developed by Jazz at Lincoln Center, the NEA Jazz Masters program and other leaders in the field.

Town Hall

11 A.M.-12:45 P.M.

Jazz will be among the topics for this participatory session intended to stimulate peer-to-peer dialogue on issues and ideas that continue conversations in earlier track sessions and introduce ideas new to the discussion.

MONDAY, JANUARY 11

Meet the NEA 2010 Jazz Masters

10:30 A.M.-NOON

Coordinated by the NEA Jazz Program, this session will feature A.B. Spellman in conversation with Jazz Masters.

Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola

7:30 P.M.

Arts Presenters members are invited to meet Jazz Masters informally (after the scheduled reception) and to enjoy an evening of jazz in this special setting.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12

Closing Plenary with Wynton Marsalis

10-11:30 A.M.

Jazz Forum: "What's Next?"

1:30-3:30 P.M.

Jazz Masters Awards Ceremony and Concert

7:30-10 P.M., Rose Theater, Jazz at Lincoln Center

Association of
Performing Arts Presenters
APAP
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.ARTSPRESENTERS.ORG.

Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia and now executive director of the Performing Arts for the Royal Conservatory at the TELUS Center for Performance and Learning in Toronto, met with colleagues from other cities not long ago, they asked how the Kimmel could afford to present jazz. “You think you can’t afford to program jazz?” he asked. “You can’t afford not to.”



SANDRA GIBSON THINKS THAT CURRENT CHALLENGES imply opportunities, but she’s not sure what that means for the jazz presenting community. “I can’t always tell you up front where it’s going to go. It’s on their time, in their natural rhythm. Our strategy is to get a network going, to encourage dialogue and to listen.”

Before starting the discussion at the Arts Presenters in January, let’s all accept two facts: Jazz lives in arts centers as much or more than in clubs these days; people consume culture and appreciate art now in ways that differ from the past, a lot of it through their computers.

But let’s perhaps not buy into a high art/pop culture dichotomy. The lives and careers of nearly any jazz musician under 50 defy such logic.

Adrian Ellis at Lincoln Center made this point: “It used to be the case that jazz was ground down between the tectonic plates of the not-for-profit sphere that kind of looked down on it, and the raw demands of commerce. Now those plates are dissolving and as they dissolve, different kinds of music move much more comfortably between them.”

Plus there’s this, which Duke Ellington wrote in 1947 for readers of the music-education journal *Etude* about jazz, but which applies, with some adjusted math, to present-day jazz presenters: “It requires, basically, two separate kinds of awareness. First, the thorough musical awareness that 25 years of steady development have brought in jazz. And, in the second place, an awareness of the contemporary scene with all its shadings of feelings.”

Today’s “shading of feelings” embrace past and present, including far-flung influences. And they require reconsideration of old ideas about jazz presentation and distribution. Jazz was once heard on the radio and danced to in performance. Those days are gone.

Jazz isn’t dead or dying. It doesn’t need saving. The business around it simply needs renovation. That will require some vision, a lot of sweat equity, and, as befits the music’s roots, a good deal of call-and-response. **PA**



“As the world is getting smaller (travel, Youtube, etc.) jazz is getting wider,” emailed saxophonist Anat Cohen, about the state of jazz affairs. “It keeps breaking its own boundaries, its own definition. Jazz is really a way of life: Keep your mind open, respect and listen to others, explore, be civilized, interact, care, understand, share, swing and then swing some more. No matter where you are and who you are.”

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