



Berklee Global Jazz Institute's Marco Pignataro (left) at a workshop during the 2014 Dominican Republic Jazz Festival

BGJI Students Serve as Jazz Ambassadors

TWO EDITIONS OF THE GLOBAL JAZZ

Ambassadors, a shifting ensemble consisting of students at Berklee College of Music's Global Jazz Institute (BGJI), impressed at the recent editions of the Panama Jazz Festival and the Dominican Republic Jazz Festival.

In Panama, the septet of French vibraphonist Simon Moullier, Bostonian tenor saxophonist Gregory Grover, Italian guitarist Tommaso Gambino, Korean pianist Ga Young, Korean bassist Seungho Jang, Israeli drummer Noam Israeli and Brazilian percussionist Nêgah Santos joined acclaimed alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón for a dynamic concert. In the Dominican Republic, a sextet including Gambino, Israeli and Santos—as well as trombonist Michael Wang, tenor saxophonist Edmar Colón and bassist Alex Gasser Londoño—offered a kinetic, exploratory investigation of five open-ended pieces by Joe Lovano, a BGJI faculty member.

In Panama, Matt Marvuglio, a flutist who is dean of Berklee's Professional Performance Division, noted that BGJI—a master's degree program for 30 students who pass an audition—has already impacted the conservatory.

"Before [BGJI], Berklee had a reputation for the scalar, chordal approach, the geometrical side of playing music," said Marvuglio, to whom Artistic Director Danilo Pérez and Managing Director Marco Pignataro have reported since the institute started in 2010. "It's created a strong experiential education component to jazz education that Berklee hasn't had before. It's created a brand with the term 'global jazz,' and brought Berklee more into the global scene. 'Global' also means all-encompassing—we have students who play harmonica, harp and cuatro, which you wouldn't see in other programs."

"I see the first five years as a period of solidifying the curriculum, seeing how programs work, measuring results from the students," Pérez said. "We've affected the way human development through music [has gained] more importance in the whole school. The way we teach is completely the way I learned with the masters."

The BGJI model has students interact with modern masters like Pérez, Lovano, John Patitucci, Kenny Werner and George Garzone, who perform several week-long residencies each semester. Pérez compared the process to the tough love mentorship he received as a just-graduated-from-Berklee apprentice in New York City a quarter century ago, recalling how Jon Hendricks and Dizzy Gillespie had him figure out unfamiliar songs by ear on the bandstand.

"They would challenge you, and there was pressure," Pérez said. "Dizzy could show me up in two seconds. That's an experience we give the students, which very few programs can address on a constant basis."

In culling the 30 students who earn admission from several hundred candidates who apply, Pérez looks for—and is attracting—"individualistic improvisers who really want to study Afro-American music, who have curiosity about social responsibility and development." He continued: "There is a practicum. But if you play well and don't really care about your peers, the dynamic isn't good for us. Our message is human development, human transformation through music."

The students play in hospitals, prisons, schools and nursing homes. "Do they have the potential to become a leader?" Pignataro asked rhetorically. "By the time we make these trips, all the training has been done. These students really are the program's ambassadors."

—Ted Panken



Poncho Sanchez

KIRA GEIGER

Conguero Lecture-Demo: Prior to his performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, Nebraska, on Jan. 15, conguero Poncho Sanchez and Francisco Torres (trombonist/musical director in Sanchez's Latin Jazz Band) led a lecture/demonstration with percussion students from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. Sanchez instructed students on the origins of the conga drum, provided a brief history of Latin jazz and demonstrated popular Latin rhythms, citing many of his influences, including Cal Tjader and Chano Pozo.

liedcenter.org

Pride of Denton: The University of North Texas One O'Clock Lab Band, directed by Jay Saunders, will appear as a headliner on April 24 at the 35th Annual Denton Arts & Jazz Festival in Denton, Texas. The band will perform at 7 p.m. on the Jazz Stage, followed by trumpeter Randy Brecker at 9 p.m. The UNT One O'Clock Lab Band was established in 1946. Over the course of its long history, the band has received six Grammy nominations for its recordings. jazz.unt.edu/oneoclock

Jazz Immersion: San Jose Jazz will present the Summer Jazz Camp June 15–26 at Valley Christian Schools Conservatory of the Arts. A two-week learning lab, the camp is designed for middle and high school students and offers all-day immersion in every aspect of jazz—from theory to performance. Each student participates in a small ensemble and a big band, and one advanced ensemble will be chosen to play on the main stage of the 2015 San Jose Jazz Summer Fest, Aug. 7–9.

sanjosejazz.org/summer-jazz-camp

Research Fellowship: The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation—JEN Research Fellowship is intended to provide opportunities for a serious educator/student/music historian to conduct a directed research project associated with the archival collections at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. The project will be allowed up to two years for final completion. A presentation of the project will take place at the Smithsonian Institution as well as at the Jazz Education Network (JEN) Conference. Submissions are due March 31; grant awardees will be notified by May 1. jazzednet.org/fellowship