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MUSIC NEWS

International Jazz Day's Global Celebrations Are On, And Again Online

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Herbie Hancock, speaking to high school students in the State Dining Room of the White House during President Obama's celebration of International Jazz Day on April 29, 2016.

Alex Wong/Getty Images

Last year, the International Jazz Day All-Star Global Concert affixed a hopeful coda to the [cruelest of months](#). And for pandemic precautionary reasons, the event was fully virtual, with a carefully produced montage of performances and salutations from around the world. This year's International Jazz Day arrives at quite a different moment, in some respects — though still a good distance from a post-COVID reality.

So the All-Star Global Concert will again take place online, with a live webcast on YouTube and Facebook, starting at 5 p.m. ET on April 30. The feed will also be carried at jazzday.com, and on the websites of UNESCO, the U.S. State Department and [United Nations Web TV](#).

Pianist [Herbie Hancock](#), who presides over International Jazz Day in his dual capacity as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and chair of the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz, will appear in the presentation alongside other artists in Los Angeles, including singers Dianne Reeves, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Andra Day. From New York, the list of performers includes pianists Cyrus Chestnut, Amina Figarova and A Bu; singers Roberta Gambarini and Veronica Swift; and saxophonists Joe Lovano, Kenny Garrett, Rudresh Mahanthappa and Melissa Aldana.

Among the other participating artists worldwide are vocalist Ivan Lins, from Rio De Janeiro, Brazil; saxophonist Igor Butman, from Moscow, Russia; Mandisi Dyantyi, from Cape Town, South Africa. Singer Angélique Kidjo, originally from Benin, will contribute a performance from UNESCO headquarters in Paris. And in the hours leading up to the All-Star Global Concert, UNESCO and the Hancock Institute will stream a series of online workshops and panels at jazzday.com. (I'm moderating one of these: a conversation about film scoring with Hancock and Kris Bowers.)

"Our International Jazz Day community has displayed incredible resilience, creativity, ingenuity and compassion throughout the immense challenges of the past year," Hancock says in a statement. "While the global pandemic continues to make life difficult for so many around the world, the example of organizers from Nepal to Mexico to Cameroon inspires us to greet this historic 10th Anniversary milestone with joy, courage and hope for the future of jazz."

That anniversary has occasioned additional programming: a [two-hour special](#) on PBS stations nationwide, at 9 p.m. EDT. Presented by WTTW Chicago, the program will feature a highlight reel of past Jazz Day concerts and other activity around the world, in locales including Istanbul, Havana, Melbourne and Osaka. The retrospective, featuring performances by the likes of [Aretha Franklin](#) and [Stevie Wonder](#), will serve as a marker of all the terrain covered during a decade of Jazz Day celebrations — and an implicit promise about the road ahead.