

Pharrell, John Mayer & More Salute Bill Clinton's Love of Jazz in L.A.

By Phil Gallo

November 10, 2014 3:37 pm



Quincy Jones, former President Bill Clinton, Herbie Hancock, Dianne Reeves and actor Kevin Spacey appear at the Thelonius Monk Jazz Trumpet Competition and All Star Gala Concert at Dolby Theatre on November 9, 2014 in Hollywood, California.

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Former president received the Thelonius Monk Institute's Maria Fisher Founder's Award on Sunday.

Herbie Hancock, Kevin Spacey, Quincy Jones and a litany of major jazz musicians saluted **President Bill Clinton** on Sunday at L.A.'s Dolby Theater for his efforts in using jazz as a diplomatic force over the last 25 years.

Clinton, whom Hancock introduced as "the commander in chief of swing," received the Thelonious Monk Institute's Maria Fisher Founder's Award for his contributions to the perpetuation of jazz music and the global expansion of jazz and music education in schools. Clinton chronicled his own relationship with jazz as a saxophonist, starting at age 6 and ending around 16 when he decided he could not follow in **John Coltrane's** footsteps. In addition to praising the underpaid pioneers of jazz culture, Clinton said the teamwork learned in jazz education could play out in other areas. "Sometimes a frustrated jazz musician," Clinton said, "winds up in another field and it works out well."

The concert, which included the three finalists in the Monk Institute's trumpet competition, emphasized jazz standards performed in the White House during Clinton's tenure. The concert branched into pop with **Pharrell Williams** and Hancock romping through a jazzy rendition of "Happy"; **John Mayer** tearing up the **Crusaders'** '70s classic "Put It Where You Want It"; and **Taj Mahal** adding gritty blues to the program with a salute to **Robert Johnson**.

After Spacey kicked off the evening aping the **Frank Sinatra-Count Basie** version of "Fly Me to the Moon," saxophonists **Wayne Shorter**, **Joshua Redman** and **Jimmy Heath**, vibraphonist **Stefon Harris**, drummer **T.S. Monk**, and Hancock formed the first of numerous all-star bands to perform **Lionel Hampton's** "Flying Home," a Clinton favorite played at his first inaugural ball. Guitarist **Kenny Burrell**, trumpeter **Jon Faddis**, bassist **Marcus Miller**, pianists **Billy Childs** and former Monk competition winner bassist **Ben Williams** were among the musicians featured in various ensembles.

Queen Latifah, **Chaka Khan**, **Dee Dee Bridgewater** and **Dianne Reeves** delivered impressive performances that recalled jazz's golden age, covering **George & Ira Gershwin's** "I Loves You Porgy" and "Lady be Good," and **Billy Taylor** and **Dick Dallas'** "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free."

This year's competition winner **Marquis Hill**, a 27-year-old from Chicago who previously won the 2013 Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Solo Competition and the 2012 International Trumpet Guild Jazz Improvisation Competition, led off a jam session on "Everyday I Have the Blues" that featured the army of trumpeters judging the contest, among them **Arturo Sandoval**, **Roy Hargrove**, **Ambrose Akinmusire** and **Randy Brecker**. Hill, whose relaxed-yet-assured tone and style was clearly the crowd's favorite, received a \$25,000 music scholarship and a recording contract with the Concord Music Group.