

KSU, city to host virtual performance to highlight International Jazz Day

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Dr. Keith McCutchen, pictured above, will perform with his trio and saxophonist Rob Dixon in honor of International Jazz Day on April 30. (photo courtesy of Youtube)

A virtual jazz concert will be held by Kentucky State University, the City of Frankfort and the Frankfort Arts Foundation as part of International Jazz Day on Friday, April 30.

The event will feature performances from Indianapolis saxophonist Rob Dixon with the Keith McCutchen Trio, featuring Louisville bassist Tyrone Wheeler, Lexington drummer Paul Deatherage and Frankfort vocalist Mary Jackson. The Kentucky State University Gospel Ensemble and guests Wilmot and Levi Fredericks from South Africa as well as the Vozes de Angola from Curitiba, Brazil, will also perform, organizers said in a news release.

The performances can be viewed April 30 on Frankfort Plant Board Cable 10 at noon or 8 p.m. It can also be viewed that day or later on [Facebook](#) or YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNR5oCv76A_ZX0VeuZEVwRw.

Original music from McCutchen will be performed, including a piece based on the pentatonic scale, a scale or group of notes common to Africa and Asia.

McCutchen, a music professor at Kentucky State, said that the event will underscore jazz's ability to evoke a sense of place with sound.

"Every song takes you to a different place," McCutchen said. "Be prepared to be in one place at one moment and then another altogether. Enjoy that ability to travel that quickly and realize that where you're going might sound like Appalachia, Ireland, or it might sound like Africa.

"If you think of places and associate places with sounds, it helps to center the fact that jazz does move and represent a lot of places and sounds very quickly in the midst of a musical collage."

McCutchen encouraged listeners unacquainted with jazz to try to identify "familiar sounds."

"Within the sounds that are unfamiliar there is melody and connection that you should be able to find in the midst of it," McCutchen said. "... Each piece has an individuality, but we fit it together as a whole."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the music will be performed physically in many different places — including regions as far-flung as Brazil and South Africa.

Vozes de Angola are based in Curitiba, Brazil. McCutchen said he met the group two years ago at a 100-year anniversary celebration of Nelson Mandela's birth there. The singers are Angolan refugees from the civil war in their home country, McCutchen said. Wilmot and Levi Fredericks are both from South Africa, and like Vozes de Angola will add their recordings to base tracks provided by McCutchen and his trio as well as saxophonist Rob Dixon.

McCutchen himself will play piano and keyboard for the performances.

The event's keynote address will be given by drummer Lewis Nash, a music professor at Arizona State University. Prominent in the jazz community, Nash has played on more than 400 recordings, including 10 Grammy award-winning albums. He's recorded with jazz greats such as Dizzy Gillespie, McCoy Tyner, Betty Carter, Sonny Rollins and Wynton Marsalis among others.

McCutchen said that the event will also draw attention to Kentucky State's rich history with jazz performance and education.

"Kentucky State has had some fabulous jazz performers and teachers that go all the way back to the '60s," McCutchen said. "The community has raised some fine artists that are doing amazing things here and elsewhere. The benefits of jazz education and its outreach into our community is evident ... it's part of a cultural component of our American self more than we realize."

Mayor Layne Wilkerson has issued a proclamation recognizing International Jazz Day in Frankfort.