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Hyde Park Jazz Fest bursting out of the box

First-year event features area's most admired artists

By Howard Reich

Tribune arts critic

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Jazz festivals rarely emerge fully formed -- it usually takes years for such events to forge distinct artistic identities.

But, at least on paper, the first Hyde Park Jazz Festival -- a free event running from 11 a.m. Saturday to 2 a.m. Sunday -- appears already ready for prime time. By presenting some of Chicago's most admired jazz artists in several of Hyde Park's most distinguished cultural institutions, the new event immediately attains critical mass.

Who after all wouldn't want to hear trumpeter Orbert Davis performing in the DuSable Museum of African American History, or listen to the genteel work of Two for Brazil at Robie House, or catch pianist Willie Pickens at the Hyde Park Art Center?

With musicians and venues of this stature, the Hyde Park Jazz Festival promises a high-level listening experience in its freshman year. Yet it's not difficult to envision the event expanding in the future, pushing into additional venues and thickening its lineup of shows.

Logistically, the festival also looks encouraging. Trolleys will run every 10 to 15 minutes, transporting visitors to all the venues; and free parking will be available in many Hyde Park locations. For details, visit hydeparkjazzfestival.org or phone 773-834-4122.

Following is an annotated guide to the Hyde Park Jazz Festival:

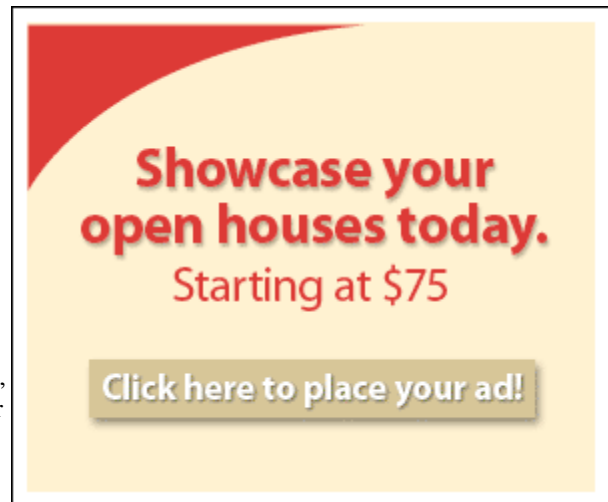
Saturday

11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Orbert Davis: The virtuosic Chicago trumpeter leads a workshop for young musicians at 11 a.m. and plays a concert at noon; DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 E. 56th Pl.

1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Charles Heath: A dynamic drummer, Heath appears with tap dancer Jumaane Taylor; Midway Plaisance Stage 1, at the skating rink, 59th Street between Ellis and Woodlawn Avenues.

2 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago explores the African pre-history of jazz; Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th St.

2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Dee Alexander: She has become one the busiest jazz vocalists in Chicago; Quadrangle Club, 1155 E. 57th St.



3 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Reginald T. McCants: The keyboardist leads a trio; Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood Ave.

3 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Bill McFarland & the Chicago Horns: McFarland heads one of the more muscular front lines in the city; Midway Plaisance Stage 2, at the skating rink, 59th Street between Ellis and Woodlawn Avenues.

3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Travis Jackson: The distinguished University of Chicago professor discusses aspects of jazz; Quadrangle Club, 1155 E. 57th St.

4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Mwata Bowden: A gifted multi-instrumentalist and bandleader, Bowden leads the University of Chicago's Jazz X-tet.

4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. - Tony Carpenter: The percussionist directs a formidable ensemble that includes saxophonist Ari Brown and pianist Robert "Baabe" Irving; Midway Plaisance Stage 1, at the skating rink, 59th Street between Ellis and Woodlawn Avenues.

4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. - Two for Brazil: Saxophonist Greg Fishman and guitarist-vocalist Paulinho Garcia explore the poetic side of Brazilian jazz; 5757 S. Woodlawn Ave. (Capacity is limited; first come, first served.)

6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - Chicago Sax in the City: Ray Silkman leads this ensemble of saxophones; Midway Plaisance Stage 2, at the skating rink, 59th Street between Ellis and Woodlawn Avenues.

8 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. - Jazz Fete: An all-star lineup features saxophonist Jimmy Ellis, at 8 p.m.; singer Maggie Brown, 9 p.m.; pianist Willie Pickens, 10 p.m.; and trumpeter Corey Wilkes, 11 p.m.; Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 S. Harper Ave.

Sunday

Midnight to 2 a.m. - Jam Session: Drummer Derek Henderson presides; Checkerboard Lounge, 5201 S. Harper Ave.

Hyde Park Jazz Festival

A great neighborhood celebrates its music

When: 11 a.m. Saturday to 2 a.m. Sunday

Where: Multiple locations in Hyde Park

Price: Free, 773-834-4122 or hydeparkjazzfestival.org

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