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MIKHAIL FREIDLIN IS HANDING THE FESTIVAL GRAND-PRIX TO JOEY SILA



ODESSA, MASTER-JAM FEST: JAM AS A FORMAT, AS A CONDITION, AS A REALITY



Text by Elena Shevchenko
Photo by Natalia Zhelezoglo, Sergei Polyakov

From 5 to 8 June in Odessa the final of a unique international festival-contest of jazz improvisational skill “*Master-Jam Fest*” (MJF) was held. For the first time in the world practice festival participants were selected by an authoritative international jury on the basis of videos that contestants had sent to the MJF organizing committee during the year. There were 271 musicians from 41 countries qualified for the semi-final. Then, the jury listened to more than eight hundred promo records and selected for the final round 43 performers from 16 countries. All the jazz orchestra instruments and vocals were presented: five musicians in each instrumental nomination, and three additional — flute, harmonica and ethnic percussion instrument (darbuka). The MJF finalists were representatives of Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Israel, Indonesia, Greece, Spain, Panama, Ecuador, Cameroon, Cuba and the U.S.A.

For the first time the essence of the jazz festival was a jazz competition in the form of a jam session! Every day ensembles (of eight

or nine musicians) formed on the results of a drawing of lots carried out the day before, performed three compositions — two in certain styles and a composition of their choice within the style framework of each day or an original piece of one of the group members. First day they played mainstream and bebop, the second day — ballad and jazz-rock (funk), the third — Latin jazz and fusion. Before the show there was a half hour rehearsal and in the evening — a competitive jam.

“The idea is just brilliant! — Enthusiastically said a world-renowned drummer from Lithuania, a member of the jury, **Vladimir Tarasov**. — Each day musicians who had never played together were playing in different lineups, and even in different styles, — it’s just great!”

The chairman of the jury, the People’s Artist of Russia **Anatoly Kroll** pointed out: “The idea of the Odessa festival is very original and life-giving. It highlights the main component, exactly what we are proud of in jazz: the ability to improvise. The uniqueness of this project is also related to the participation in it of soloists, accomplished musicians having their stylistic concept, capable to show their intellectual level with improvisation. And at the same time each of them will try to show their best side in the multicolored diversity of the contemporary jazz styles. The audience is sure to get pleasure since in three days they will be able to hear everything that there is in jazz. Where else one can hear this? Only at the Festival Master-Jam in Odessa!!!”

The festival was a great success, full of applause and shouts of "Bravo!" and "Encore!" in crowded halls. On-line broadcast of each competition day allowed thousands of audience not only to watch the events on the Odessa stage, but every night make up their top rating of performers. Hundreds of comments and amateur photos were posted in social networks and on the official website Master-Jam.com.

Almost all of the musicians were playing wholeheartedly. They were creating on the stage a unique creative atmosphere in which even the most complex musical ideas were incarnated naturally and with ease. In each group necessarily appeared a leader who took on the role of the generator of ideas and the director-arranger. Instant reaction to everything that happened on stage, regular monitoring of the development of the musical process, participation in it and the direction of the overall dramatic concept of each play — all this comes after years of playing and hundreds of concerts. These are the priceless qualities of masters of jazz improvisation that attract lovers of such concerts which make feel currents of energy and establish strong links between the performers and the audience. This is what distinguishes jazz from all other musical forms, and this is its special value!

The Odessa audience supported sincerely the inspired solos and may have led to violations of the rules of contest performances that went beyond thirty minutes. It is clear that they wanted to listen more and more!

The uniqueness of the moment was skillfully emphasized by experienced masters of the world stage: **Jay Rodriguez** — a saxophonist and flutist from New York, twice nominated for the Grammy Award, introduced in the "Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz", **Meir Ben Michael** — a guitarist from Tel Aviv with twenty years of professional experience, **Alexis Bosch** — a pianist from Havana, producer, jury member of many national contests, **Melvin Taylor** — a greatest guitarist in the history of modern rock, funk, blues and jazz from Fairfax (USA), **Roberto Garcia** — a world-class Cuban trumpeter, professor at the Institute of Arts in Havana, **Moran Baron** — the best trombonist and bassist (!) of Israel. Despite their high professional status, confirmed by excellent grades of professionals and listeners, high rating among musicians (and why should they come to this contest?) — They all were carried away by the idea of spontaneous improvisation in unexpected lineups that change every competitive day and playing in a variety of styles. Their huge creative experience and reliability of playing in ensemble became fully apparent, and even helped, clearly, professionally and convincingly, to reveal the talent of **Alexey Petukhov** — a pianist from Odessa, **Oleg Velikanov** — a saxophonist from Rostov-on-Don, make known the talents of other musicians. The jury in many cases had to divide the palm of victory. According to the contest rules it was supposed to adjudge only one prize and one winner title in each nomination. But according to the totality of performances there were several soloists whose improvisation mastery in many styles, ability to discover the diversity of tone quality of their instruments, ways of thinking and, most importantly, expressiveness of their music got the highest score in one nomination! That's why among the winners were also included **Dominik Fuss** — a trumpeter from Austria, **Odei Al-Magut** — a trombonist from the Netherlands (originally, by the way, from Rostov-on-Don), **George Stavroulakis** — a guitarist from Greece. The title of winner went to a bass player from Panama — **Ruben Ramos Medina** and the only jazz lady on drums (!) — temperamental **Yissy Garcia** from Cuba.

Laureate diplomas and memorable symbol of the contest were also awarded to **Nelly Manukyan** — a flutist from Yerevan, **Bo-**

ris Plotnikov — a harmonica performer from Ekaterinburg and **Wissam Arram** — percussionist playing the darbuka from Israel.

Among the singers the honorary title of laureate went to **Tamara Lukasheva** from Odessa, and the Audience Awards to **Viktorija Pilatovic** from Spain and **Gregory Boyd** from Denmark.

Anatoly Kroll began the presentation of the Grand Prix of the First *MJF* with the words: "The Jazz God sent us a real miracle — it's a young pianist from Indonesia **Joey Alexander Sila**". With thunderous applause of finalists and the overcrowded hall the author of the idea and the *MJF* general producer **Mikhail Freidlin** brought to the stage the main prize — a bronze banjo with a gilded bow-tie on the strings.

It should be recognized that the implementation of the contest program by a so young musician (and Joey with his frail physique looks much younger than nine years) was not only a surprise, but a sensation. The young pianist showed ensemble precision, attention to the partners, the breadth and fluency in mastering a variety of traits of melodic and chord technique in which stylistic elements of the play now of **Count Basie**, now of **Herbie Hancock** could be discerned. Joey's little hands moved across the keyboard skillfully and confidently, as if on command of the Wise Jazz Mind. Particular attention was drawn to the original solo piece of the jazz prodigy. Incredibly, but in fact really interesting, "adult" thoughts were springing up in the eyes of the partners and the audience. How could one avoid believing in the mystery of reincarnation of the spirit of the greatest pianists of the history of jazz, and cease to admire the Little Prince of jazz piano!

Odessa was very lucky, because born in the XXI century, Joey exactly here made a triumphant success on a par with adults. Winner of the Grand Prix thanked sincerely for the support and love all those who had helped him to achieve such a great success in his first international contest in his life. It's nice that the young



TAMARA LUKASHEVA

improviser got moral support not only from parents, but also from the high representative of his country — Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Indonesia in Ukraine **Ms. Ninic Kuhn Maryati**.

Many musicians spoke about a special festive atmosphere of friendliness and festive enthusiasm. Here are just some of the comments.

Viktorija Pilatovic: "I am pleased to take part in the competitive selection. I loved very much the idea to perform during four days with musicians from around the world. I have absolutely no sense of competition, but there is a festive festival mood. I wish that everyone had fun; all could have a bit of jam and a bit of jazz.

The bass player from Israel **Ran Levy** did not hide the love to Odessa that broke out, he even learned most "colorful" phrases in "Odessa language" with a special intonation, which only a musician with a sensitive ear and an open heart can catch. As for the contest, Levy spoke with great joy; he admired the grandeur of the international scale of the project.

Nelly Manukyan confessed: "We not only quickly found a musical language of communication, but also became friends. Now we are thinking about future joint projects."

Deputy Chairman of the jury **Nikolay Goloshchapov** (Odessa) pointed out: "I had never observed such an extraordinary excitement of musicians, wish for playing with any partner, including a big band."

Performance of the big band of the *MJF* finalists was another unique component of the jazz festivity on the Odessa stage. Anatoly Kroll with great interest reacted to the proposal of Nikolay Goloshchapov to prepare concurrently with the contest a performance of all the soloists in the **All Stars Band**, and the gala concert was adorned with a brilliant program of six pieces in a mod-

ern arrangement for jazz orchestra. Pianists, bassists, guitarists and drummers changed each other in each piece, and the soloists with their improvisations (again her Majesty Improvisation!) masterfully added bright traits of sound to the polyphonic fabric of a complicated musical score. The jury members were conductors — Anatoly Kroll (Moscow), Nikolay Goloshchapov (Odessa), and **Andrey Machnev** (Rostov-on-Don). The audience was delighted!

Already after the festival, Anatoly Osherovich said that it was almost impossible to prepare such a diverse and complex program at two rehearsals! But since the musicians themselves were very interested in the creative result, a real miracle happened!

This was another confirmation of the reality of the objectives of the *MJF* organizers: to open brightest talents of individuals and show their possibility to interact creatively in spontaneous ensembles, including a big band.

The author of the idea and the *MJF* general producer Mikhail Freidlin accentuated: "Jazz is an indicator of the growing interest to the human personality and the possibility of spiritual communication of artists in a globalized world. The mission of *Master-Jam Fest* is bringing out the best improvising performers, wide public recognition of their talent, and spreading the idea of improvisation as the most important quality of modern thought".

Broad thinking of the *MJF* finalists manifested not only in the performance. At rehearsals, limited in time to one and a half hours, they showed the ability to concentrate themselves on the selection of competitive pieces and skillfully planned their arrangements. And in the evening, the musicians delighted the audience with stunt performances. Sometimes, directly on stage in front of astonished spectators zestful arrangements were born: without interrupting his own play, Jay Rodriguez were organizing in the blues riffs of wind instruments, and temperamental Alexis Bosch at the beginning was conducting the horns behind

YISSY GARCIA



ALEXEY BOGOLYUBOV, BORIS PLOTNIKOV, GREGORY BOYD



the scenes, and then almost jumped on stage to rhythmically help to “put together” an accompaniment for a soloist in *Latin jazz*. And at that point it was not a matter that he was playing “on the enemy field” — he was carried away by the good music!

Great interest was aroused also by other events held during the festival *MJF*: master classes and informal discussions with Jay Rodriguez, Boris Plotnikov and Wissam Arram.

And the exhibition-installation of the outstanding master of sound visualization, a member of the legendary trio **GTC** Vladimir Tarasov collected many art lovers in the recently opened Museum of Odessa Modern Art.

The contest ended with power chords of delight and gratitude of all the participants of the jazz festivity to the organizers. Reduced to a peak emotional intensity, the audience gave a standing ovation for a long time and did not want to go away.

While the press analyzes so bright creative results of an unprecedented global event held at Odessa’s jazz stage, Mikhail Freidlin already is cherishing new ideas. He plans to expand the project to the world level. Contests of jazz skills will be held in other cities and countries, but the final and awarding of “*Jazz Oscar*” Mikhail Freidlin is intended to conduct necessarily in Odessa!

MASTER-JAM FEST. NOTES OF A JURYMAN



Text by
Cyril Moshkow

Frankly, I did not expect major discoveries from *Master-Jam Fest*. And not even because of all the existing jazz disciplines — orchestra, ensemble, composition, arrangement, improvisation — here the primary importance is assigned to only one, the last, and as the form to demonstrate improvisational skills quite naturally has been selected the jam session, while we are used to the rule of life: “it is very interesting to participate in jams, but to listen from outside is not necessarily that interesting”. I happened to be also before in the juries of competitions of different levels and trends, and always the contests had some kind of boundary conditions, generally — the age. You should agree, it is right and important to participate in children’s competitions when you are only acquiring skill of playing an instrument; in youth — when you have mastered it, and, finally, in the “young musician contests” — when,

apart from knowing the craft, you have to be able to show your attitude toward art. But what about a contest in which the boundary conditions simply do not exist? A contest in which very young debutants (who recently left — if ever have left! — the age of teenage competitions) participate on a par with experienced veterans who have been on the professional stage for two or three decades, and have a discography of half a dozen names? A contest in which 9-year-old Joey from Jakarta and 46-year-old Jay from New York come out to compete (well, or play in one ensemble — if it happens so after the drawing of lots)...

But suddenly it turned out that this is the forte of *Master-Jam Fest*. That a competition in one of half a dozen disciplines can be incredibly interesting, if the

pre-selected from hundreds of applicants musicians are going to show exactly improvisational skills, in their entirety, and not to act out a “compulsory program”. Because these skills — if they are the cornerstone, and the selection is made correctly — draw (like a locomotive draws a long train) both the ensemble, and the arrangement, and even the composition.

However, only in the event that a team formed by the drawing of lots has a strong natural leader — to accumulate, like a crystal in a supersaturated solution, around him both the ensemble, and the arrangement, and the composition, the latter turns to be the most interesting, because this composition takes shape in front of us, in real time, becoming “an improvisational composition” — an improvisation of the second, higher order.

Of course, this only happens when there is a leader. And there were not so many leaders in the contest — after all, they are not so numerous in life in general. If one of the five ensembles of each evening (and sometimes more than one) after the drawing of lots did not get such a leader, the ensemble, of course, could formally exist and even play — in fact all are professionals and talents, but the play will be just formal, like of pupils. And if such an ensemble has got at least one “weak link” (and, alas, there were some also among the contestants), then there is almost nothing to listen to in general.

Fortunately, there were less “weak links” than the leaders — almost all of the contestants got in three days a chance to play at least once in a strong lineup with a not indifferent, passionate, driving leader. The most driving proved to be the saxophonist (and, as it turned out on the third day, a strong flutist) Jay Rodriguez: This is an incredibly groovy, dare I say it, dude — where there is Rodriguez, everything is cooking, boiling and bubbling, and a complicated developed form of jam performance grows in view of everybody, like a tropical flower.

How to avoid the “weak links” in the future? The jury of the final was composed of 11 experts from four countries. With the chairman of the jury — People’s Artist of the Russian Federation Anatoly Kroll — and the members of the jury such as the head of

the jazz program of the Gnessin Academy of Music **Valery Grokhovsky**, an elder of the Russian jazz history **Vladimir Feyertag** or a veteran of new jazz stage of Lithuania Vladimir Tarasov, it is difficult to expect a bias or random decisions, especially as at the beginning the solutions were summed up for each of the 11 members, and then were refined by a lengthy discussion of the entire jury panel and the approval of the Chairman.

But the pre-selection (there were nearly five hundred applications filed to the contest, and more than 270 were qualified for the semi-final) was carried out, as I understand it, by the Odessa organizing committee. Perhaps if the final had slightly less local musicians, the festival would only win, and the victories of Odesites in their respective nominations would have been more significant — a promising pianist Alexey Petukhov and brilliant singer Tamara Lukasheva.

I will not hide that the list of the winners, which resulted to me according to the sum of scores I have given in three competitive days, was a little different from the one that was eventually adopted by consensus of the jury. But that’s quite normal. It’s true that we did not judge a long jump contest where there are only two criteria — to jump the farthest possible and not to overstep; meanwhile we listened to music, and people perceive music differently, they have preferences and different tastes. And nothing depended on a musician in their nomination in the end. The main was something else: the Festival itself. During four days I spoke, perhaps, to a half of the 42 participants, and all of them in one voice declared that — no matter how corny it sounds — the Olympic principle “the main thing is not to win but to participate” really works. Each of the forty-three musicians gained a unique experience that is irreplaceable. Four or five days of closest contact with each other at a constant shuffle of lineups by the drawing of lots, in addition, the participation in the final big band became for most of the musicians the main value — and a value hardly to be obtained in some other way.

If we talk about subjective feelings, many participants during the festival, time and again caused to the writer of these lines



GALA-CONCERT, LEFT — HERNAN JAY RODRIGUEZ

“goose skin” — a sure sign that the stage does not simply demonstrates “improvisational skills,” but this is the music that sounds. By the way, “goose bumps” (a term coined in the “*Dzhaz.Ru*” by one of the judges of the current *MJF* — **Mikhail Mitropolsky** — still 14 years ago) were not necessarily accompanying the play of those who eventually won the festival. More precisely, on the contrary: among those who did not become the winner, there were also those who in some moments could make me as a listener feel stopped breathing. I will mention only three musicians among them — an Odessa pianist **Roxana Smirnova**, an Austrian trumpeter **Gerhard Ornig** and a trombonist from Yekaterinburg **Vitaliy Vladimirov**. The fact that they are not among the winners is a mere coincidence: their skill in no way was inferior to the skill of those who became qualified, and these are only three names — there were, of course, more of them.

The thrilling performances of Grand Prix winner stand apart. Joey Sila is unique, who are born, maybe, once in a century. I do not know who this boy will become, whether he will be in the end a star of that magnitude which is discernible in his play right now. But this is a phenomenon, the close presence of which even scares to some extent. For his nine years as highlighted in her report on the festival Elena Shevchenko, he is small — thin legs, even not reaching to the piano pedals — he just puts them on the floor. But with this tiny body he has long, strong fingers that do not just run around and not just quickly extract streams of sounds, as is the case with other prodigies. These fingers are playing incredibly mature music. Joey, in the words of his parents — **Danny** and **Fara**, who travel with him — plays only about three years, having begun to go in for music on the age of six years, and he had played the classical music only eight months, and then switched to jazz. How he does it — it is not clear.

They showed him in Jakarta to Herbie Hancock himself, and the legend of jazz piano was amazed. The boy is very shy, but from time to time enters into the conversation, which his parents conduct for him, authoritatively inserting something like, “And Herbie told me that one should listen more to the music of their nation to know their roots and be different from other musicians”.

When he starts playing solo, during the first seconds you listen indulgently. Awkward, jerky phrases are sounding (and then it turns out that by his age of nine years he had time to study and love **Thelonious Monk**). Then suddenly — a complex, long phrases, rolling across the entire keyboard. Then — the same phrases repeated in the technique of “bound hands” (two-voice texture!). Then — a rich, ripe texture, with well-developed left hand, “adult” comp (chordal accompaniment), with a masterly development and an acute phrasing...

But the biggest “goose skin” was proved at the gala concert. Joey Sila, who has just won the Grand Prix, played solo a difficult composition of his own — a penetrating melody, an embodiment of the concept of “joy through the pain.” It so happened that I was listening to him from behind the scenes, standing just three meters behind him. He played a long, rich of ideas and slowly evolving introductory cadenza — and went on making of this theme an emotional climax ... No, I’ve never heard anything like this. It was not just a melody. It was a touch to the absolute. Perhaps, if Mozart was born in our time, he would have played something like that.

After having finished, the boy came to the microphone, bowed with reserve (the Hall was raging, the ovation was incomparable) and with a squeaky child’s voice said in English:

— Thank you all for coming here. Thanks to those who organized it all. And thanks to the Lord. Goodbye.

And he went backstage to his parents, fearfully pleased with himself.

VLADIMIR FEYERTAG TO MIKHAIL FREIDLIN. THE JURY PATRIARCH’S LETTER TO THE AUTHOR AND PRODUCER OF MASTER-JAM FEST

I caught myself on a thought, that I cannot get off of my mind the event that took place in Odessa. More than a month had passed, but the feeling is as if it just finished yesterday. Good old dramatic theatre on Grecheskaya str. is still standing in front of my eyes, the dark side-scenes, in which I constantly ran into unrecognizable acquaintances, nine-years-old boy from Indonesia at the piano, long table in the middle of the auditorium for the respectful jury. Was it all so long ago? I do not know about the other members of the jury, but I can’t forget this feast, although I can’t recall it without notes-hints, who was playing, what piece and with whom. I’ve never had such an experience. After any festival vivid performances, unusual music (or an old favorite, or brand new, but fascinating), some unusual cases remained in memory. But there’s nothing to remember. All three days seemed to be the same. And the fourth and final one even didn’t interest me a lot. It is more likely to say it was annoying me. Usual stir — handing diplomas, gifts, crowds on the stage, talking, talking, applause, talking again, and then consolidated big band, which, as they say, “by definition” could not play badly. The musicians were strong, and Anatoly Kroll is an experienced conductor and a coach...

In order to understand why “*Master-Jam*” became an extraordinary event for me I began to remember other festivals, including “*Odessa Jazz Carnivals*”. Festivals had always been well or badly composed gala concerts. Each ensemble got its own time and played the music chosen by its members. That is, each group, each band had its conception, had a unique jazz sound, hits, own dramaturgy. And each of the evenings had its headliner. These were the organizers, who did their best to make the highlights being scattered in the afternoons and evenings. And boasted: “And such and such is coming to us. How, didn’t you hear? .. This is the strongest man after **Coltrane!**” Most often all Russian and Ukrainian festivals went on in this way — one star of the world level — and the others. And if we talk about the competitions, the organizing committees were lining up the auditions very strictly in order not to have neither surprises, nor glitches. There are three diplomas, it is necessary to find the best three ones contestants, to note, to remember, to present and to go apart eventually.

And what on earth did you made, dear Mikhail Pavlovich? It doesn’t look like festival, there are no programs, no names, and no conceptions. Though, it seems like a contest, but then what kind of a competition it is, if there is almost no such, that one would like to erase from the list of applicants at once. All contestants are playing great. I remember that I, for example, put “excellent” marks to all five trumpeters, then it turned out that all members of the jury put the same marks. And we were deciding for a long time, whom to distinguish. Finally Roberto Garcia was admitted to be the best one, who conquered everyone by incredibly beautiful sound of flugelhorn, improvisational logic and

great artistic taste. Yes, Mikhail Pavlovich, if to choose between festival and contest, you held the contest. But the contest of such level, where there was no rearguard.

And here I have a question for you, Mikhail Pavlovich. How did you manage to zombify the experienced Odessa audience? I understand that the Internet “worked” for you. Well, how many people saw your candidates beforehand, I mean the people who looked in the net first — and then said “I will certainly go”? I think no more than 20-25 persons. And what about others, who are accustomed to see the festival program first and then decide if they are going to go this evening, because these particular musicians are playing, or not to go because they are not great fans of such music. And here one should go every evening, there is no program, jazz will be played — this is it! And I suspect that this time audience went not to listen to musicians but to see “the Freidlin’s event”. I think that Odessa (generally specific, a bit snobbish and all-knowing) fell in love with you, believed in you and was convinced: “it cannot be bad there”.

Surprisingly, but this contest of improvisers has become a powerful festivity. And do you know why? Because there wasn’t other concept than “Guys, we are playing jam!” And the audience this time went deeply into the quality of improvisations, in structural logic of musicians’ thoughts, and wasn’t looking for the progress in music, new ideas, brilliant themes and compositions birth. Banal standards sounded. It looked like a chess tournament. All the openings are learned and clear for 5-6 movements, but what is happening in middlegame is a riddle. Here, whether you like it or not, qualified participation in the evaluation of improvisational skills starts, to which residents of Odessa were incredibly capable. The public has never been wrong in the assessment of what is happening, and gave a standing ovation to Dane-African American. Does it often happen in Odessa?

Dear Misha, we can’t imagine, how much jazz injected into the music of twentieth century. The famous statement, that the music consists of melody, harmony and rhythm, today only true in reverse: the music consists of rhythm, harmony and melody. In any case, in jazz and in all kinds of non-academic music it’s only this way! The rhythm is created by rhythm-group (firstly, drums and bass), then harmonic organization appears, and then melody. Half of the so-called jazz hits are just successfully found rhythmical phrases, agree with me. Remember themes of Hancock, **Silver, Powell**. Musicians are driven at inventing such “riff-shaped” themes, which, actually creates rhythmic aura of jazz. And melody? It’s great when you manage to compose something outstanding, but “Round Midnight”, “Take the «A» Train” or “Dolphin Dance” do not appear every day. Sorry for my theorizing, but I want to note that today the world is full of great universal improvisers, ready to fly to the edge of the world to play with new colleagues, and to stand in front of the new listeners. Do you understand, Misha, what chance you gave to those who have not yet entered the top ten of the greats, who have not yet got to prestigious festivals or (I admit it) are tired of their own projects and want to dive into the jazz ocean in the other hemisphere despite of circumstances, contracts and other routine work?

You created the draw, you composed such intrigue, perhaps, some of the participants didn’t like that. On the stage regularly appeared typical bands — three brass players (trumpet, trombone, saxophone) and a full rhythm section (guitar, drums, piano, bass). And vocalists. And five of such ensembles every day. And they have to play within certain genre restrictions: whether ballad, or standard, or Latin, or funk. Most fortunate were those, who have no competition: a remarkable flutist from Armenia Nelly Manukyan, harmonica performer Boris Plotnikov (Yekaterinburg) and Israeli Wissam Arram, who played the darbuka (a rare instrument in the percussion group). Did you notice that some of the bands played in banal jam way — first all brass musicians for a couple of squares, then the singer, then a group of rhythm, and



not forgetting about the drum solo? Theme in the beginning and theme in the end. And in some collaborations leaders were determined instantly, in the second piece it was clear, who’s in charge. This is a very interesting psychological phenomenon. Someone plays great, but isn’t a leader by the character. Does it happen? It does. And someone is an outstanding leader and takes everything over at once, and he succeeds. In this capacity, I would highlight American saxophonist Jay Rodriguez and Israeli guitarist Meir Ben Michael. It is interesting that the leadership qualities were not shown by singers, although vocalist can not be a sideman by nature. I’m always hypercritical to vocalists. Of course, the situation was disadvantageous for them: they are given two squares to sing or to lead a theme in unison with the brass instruments and then they have to stand and listen until all the others are playing. Only Viktorija Pilatovic decided to change the location, stand back, move over, sympathetically, “cheering” for partners. All the rest just “stood” on the stage the whole set and didn’t know where to put themselves.

Both of us know that jazz is a very broad stylistic range, and for sure there were people who reproached organization committee that the modern spontaneous (new improvisational) music was not represented. But I understand how far-sighted you were

by stopping only on mainstream. Otherwise the form of the concert would have disappeared, there would be over-improvisational permissiveness, which could not give any chance to the jury to agree on the criteria and the values of expression freedom. So all is correct. There was accessible, understandable to everybody couplet-variational jazz — from bebop to hard-bop and funk. Seemed like the public was allowed to go to the rehearsal, all-knowing Odessits saw jazz lab and were convinced that there are plenty of improvising masters in the world and all of them are interesting to be heard. There were no star names, but almost all the participants turned out to be stars.

Both you and I know very well in which way jazz festivals and contests are organized. Agree that we have here so-called "routine" festivals made according to the same patterns each year. And you, Mikhail, made unbelievable, you broke norms. And breaking norms always brings an intrigue. And what a show, what a theater can be without intrigue?

And moreover, you rehabilitated the concept of "jam".

Do you remember the trembling attitude of Soviet Union musicians and jazz fans towards the jam-sessions? Getting to jam (even with foreign masters) was more important than getting to the concert. We would like to show: here we are, we play well, but you don't know us, you don't invite us. Jam was a small complimentary check into the area of international music-making. Our jazzmen didn't have other opportunity to show themselves to the world. But for 30 years there are no restrictions for traveling, touring, joint projects and jam lost its importance. Why would you play something unprepared, why do you have to prove something, when there is a well-balanced and prepared program? All in all, today jam is not needed for pro musicians at all. On the largest jazz festivals jams are not provided. Sessions are held in New-York, but they are fairs for beginners. It is needed to register beforehand and to be ready to play any standard any moment. Producers, managers come in search of bright talents. They don't always come. But the neophyte musicians exchange business cards with hope that someone will call and offer the job.

Misha, I'm grateful to you for the idea. I'm grateful to your friends volunteers for enthusiasm. Odessa deserves something special, I always had such opinion. And your team has done the unbelievable, broke all the norms of festivals and contests, and did it, on the one hand, with due pathos, and cozy on the other hand. I don't want to put the marks to musicians from different countries. The boy Joey Alexander Sila is an incredible phenomenon, though to some extent a typical for the world of global and instantaneous information. But even he is not so bright in my memory as the organization of the festival itself.

I can't help admiring how subtly and charmingly my colleague Elena Shevchenko held this marathon. And what is the thing I remembered the most? Misha, you may not have noticed, but there was the inevitable moment, when Lena had to officially introduce the jury members and not to miss any important detail. And she made it without a hitch, and then came to the text: Elena Shevchenko — art director of the club, "Ragtime", and so on and so on. A short pause and then suddenly with another intonation and with a chuckle sounded "It's me...". No exclamation mark, somehow embarrassed, surprised. And it was sweet, in Odessa style. Can you imagine that Belza said it? No. Because for this you have to be from Odessa.

Dear Misha! I didn't write official review, not because I didn't want to. But because I couldn't do it officially. That is why I write the letter to you personally in two months after the event. Feel free to use my ideas or not pay attention to them. Let's assume that I responded. And I believe you will be able carry on, and surprise us with unusual talented initiatives again and again. ■



27 июня в Вашингтоне были объявлены имена лауреатов премии «Мастера джаза Национального фонда искусств» (NEA Jazz Masters), которая будет вручена 13 января 2014 в Нью-Йорке. Как и в прошлом году, лауреаты 2014 г. получат премии в размере 25 000 долларов каждый. К именам 128 людей джаза, уже удостоенных высочайшего для американского джазмена государственного отличия (Национальный Фонд искусств США, который присуждает премию — федеральное учреждение), теперь добавлены ещё четыре. Это педагог, первопроходец и новатор джазового образования, саксофонист **Джейми Эберсолд**: саксофонист, кларнетист и композитор **Энтони Брэкстон**; контрабасист и педагог **Ричард Дэйвис**; пианист **Кит Джарретт**.

Церемония вручения, как и в предшествующие годы, пройдёт в здании джазовой программы нью-йоркского Линкольн-Центра (*Jazz @ Lincoln Center*) и будет транслироваться в интернете на сайтах НФИ США и *J@LC*, а также на цифровом радиоканале *SiriusXM*.

Говорит **Джоан Шигекава**, и.о. председателя Национального Фонда искусств США: «От лица Национального Фонда искусств с гордостью объявляю имена новых «Мастеров джаза». Национальный Фонд искусств твёрдо поддерживает эту сугубо американскую форму искусства всеми способами: и через образовательные программы, как наша программа *NEA Jazz in the Schools*, и через поддержку концертной и образовательной деятельности Мастеров Джаза прошлых лет, и, как в сегодняшнем случае, через нашу программу премий выдающимся личностям, всю свою жизнь посвятившим совершенствованию, распространению и развитию музыки!» ■

