

JOAN CHAMORRO & JAZZ PEDAGOGY IN BARCELONA

by Viktor Zappner*

When President Barack Obama was opening the International Jazz Day concert at the White House on April 30, 2016, he proclaimed jazz to be "America's most significant artistic contribution to the world".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKgCN9UR3Ls>).

In Tasmania, the iconic pianist Ian Pearce used to say that proper jazz should always have one foot in the gutter. He was rightly pointing to the origins of jazz in the mixture of African-American and European musical systems within the multi-ethnic and multi-coloured melting pot of New Orleans with its blues, spirituals, rural dances, bars and brothels.



Pianist Ian Pearce with the author Viktor Zappner in Burnie, Tasmania, in July 1986: proper jazz should always have one foot in the gutter...

**Viktor Zappner left Czechoslovakia in 1978 and arrived in Hobart, Tasmania in 1979. Elinor Morrisby, a Hobart born flute player who had only recently returned from Prague after studying there at the Conservatory of Music, introduced him to the jazz musicians and enthusiasts Alf Properjohn and Allan Brown. He soon moved to Burnie where has been involved in jazz as a musician and administrator for some 40 years.*

For years now I have been worrying about the possibility that well-meaning, very creative, progressive and usually highly musically educated and trained musicians will drain blues, gospel, swing and New Orleans completely out of jazz. In other words that, gradually, both feet of jazz would be on the clean, sanitized non-descript pavement. That any trace of the great Louis Armstrong will disappear. That this unique art form will be de-Americanised and morphed into a vapid "World Music" while forgetting that jazz is, and always was, the best world music.

Then one day I found about Joan Chamorro, his Sant Andreu Jazz Band and the way he is keeping jazz close to its roots.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sant_Andreu_Jazz_Band).



Joan Chamorro (far right), with his Sant Andreu Jazz Band...

American jazz saxophonist Jesse Davis, one of many American jazz musicians who have visited Sant Andreu and participated in their program, expressed his own sentiments about the value of what Joan Chamorro has accomplished in such a short time. In a documentary about Sant Andreu, he told Chamorro:

I've never seen that kind of dedication from such small children. Maybe you think I'm crazy, but the jazz community worldwide is gonna thank you, one day. What you've done is a great service to this music. And I mean that from the bottom of my heart.

Here you can watch that band's 2011 concert in Barcelona's Teatre Coliseum. Its 'star' musician, Andrea Motis, was 16 at that time. (There are four one-minute-long talks between Joan Chamorro and Andrea Motis. You can add English subtitles to it)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtnKXZgoGtw>



American jazz saxophonist Jesse Davis: he said to Chamorro “what you've done is a great service to this music”...



Another shot of the Sant Andreu Jazz Band...

Here is Andrea Motis (vocals, trumpet, saxophone) with the Sant Andreu Band performing Horace Silver's *Sister Sadie* in 2016. She was 21 at that time.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VfjvsOMP6k&list=RD6VfjvsOMP6k&start_radio=1



Horace Silver: his “Sister Sadie” is performed by 21-year-old vocalist Andrea Motis, who plays a trumpet solo, and also plays alto in the saxophone section... PHOTO COURTESY JAZZ REFLECTIONS

In one of the comments on the internet, Ira Slomowitz says this about Chamorro: "Leaving the talent and quality aside, I have never seen such joy in all the singers and players. Not only should all music educators look to him, all educators in general could learn from him".
