

ISFAR FRENCH JAZZ EVENING

KERRY MULLAN¹

Members and friends were invited to an evening of French jazz with musicians Colin Nettelbeck on piano, and Richard Miller on clarinet and saxophone. The evening was held at the Alliance Française de Melbourne and replaced the annual ISFAR dinner.

The audience was treated not only to some wonderful jazz pieces, but to a running commentary by Colin Nettelbeck on the story of jazz in France, beginning with its origins during the First World War, and its development through the Hot Club of France (1932), with Panassié and Delaunay, and the new sound of Django Reinhart, Stéphane Grappelli and the Quintet. (Pieces played were *Nuages* and *Minor Swing*.)

The next example was Sidney Bechet, who first performed in 1925 with Josephine Baker in the *Revue Nègre*, returning to live in France in 1952, bringing the New Orleans style of jazz. Our musicians played *Si tu vois ma mère*, recently re-popularised by Woody Allen in his *Midnight in Paris*. This was followed by two John Lewis compositions, *Afternoon in Paris* and *Django*. Lewis had brought his Modern Jazz Quartet to France in 1956, introducing a cooler form of jazz compared with the bebop style that preceded it.

A segment on Michel Legrand included *Watch what happens* from *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964), and *What are you doing for the rest of your life?* from *The Happy Ending*. Legrand, son of big-band leader Raymond Legrand, turned 80 this year: he has written more than two hundred film and television scores in addition to many memorable songs, and has worked with many of the American jazz greats, including Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Bill Evans.

Nettelbeck presented one of his own compositions, *Paris Wager*, as a way of underlining France's enduring love of jazz, and jazz's enduring love of France. In the final piece of the evening, *Autumn Leaves* (Joseph Kosma/Jacques Prévert 1945), the musicians were joined in an impromptu 'jam' by singer Sonya Veronica.

¹ My thanks to Colin Nettelbeck for his assistance with these notes.

The evening was highly enjoyable and a wonderful conclusion to the ISFAR activities for 2012.

NOTES ON THE MUSICIANS

Colin Nettelbeck is Emeritus Professor of French at the University of Melbourne. Author of numerous writings on modern and contemporary French cultural history, he is President of the Institute for the Study of French-Australian Relations (ISFAR). One of his recent books is *Dancing with de Beauvoir: Jazz and the French*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Publishing, 2004. He is a keen amateur jazz musician.

Richard Miller played with the very popular and legendary 'Red Onions' in the 60's and early 70's, undertaking two successful European tours with them, including the Breda Jazz Festival. He performed with the modern jazz group 'Onaje' which has performed at the Montreal Jazz Festival, and in 'Blues Express'. An avid composer with eclectic taste, Richard writes most of the original material performed by the group and has been a member since 1984. He has played and recorded with Jimmy Witherspoon and Red Richards. He has also played with Kenny Davern, Art Hodes, James Morrison, Bob Barnard, and Ralph Sutton amongst many others. He is Treasurer of ISFAR.

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