

Ambassador Beatrice W. Welters
Opening Remarks for ‘Jazz Journey’ Jazz Concert
April 26, 2012
National Academy of the Performing Arts
Lord Kitchener Auditorium

As Prepared

Salutations

- The Honorable Winston “Gypsy” Peters, Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism,
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Mr. Curtis Manchoon, Chairman of the University of Trinidad and Tobago,
- Other Distinguished Directors of the University of Trinidad and Tobago,
- Specially Invited Guests,
- Our very, very talented musicians,
- The U.S. Embassy staff
- Regular attendees of our Saturday afternoon concerts,
- Members of the Media,
- Ladies and Gentlemen especially those who are joining us for the first time,

Good evening and Welcome!

This evening’s event does two things, it is a celebration of International Jazz Month and it brings to a close another season of musical collaboration between The United States Embassy with the Faculty Musicians of the Academy for the Performing Arts, and the University of Trinidad and Tobago, we all welcome you to a very special “Jazz Journey”, featuring outstanding performers from both the United States, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Referred to as “America’s classical music,” jazz is one of North America’s oldest and most celebrated musical genres.

It all began in America’s South, in the 19th century, where slaves told their life stories through work songs and spirituals. The field holler would call out in song and the slaves working in the field would respond in song with deep rhythmic tones. The song was a spontaneous reaction.

Very much like jazz with its strong rhythmic base, blue notes, solos, “call-and-response” patterns, and improvisation of melody.

This inventive and creative style went from purely song to instruments, such as the banjo, fiddle and drum and then on to bass, string instruments and piano.

In New Orleans musicians adapted Cuban and other Caribbean rhythms and melodies for the piano. In cities like Chicago, and New York, Jazz became an urban music, tied to urban nightlife, prohibition, vice zones, dance halls, inner city neighborhoods, and concert stages.

Jazz has been a part of American culture for over 100 years.

Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Billie Holiday and many other famed artists not only inspired modern musicians, but continue to instill audiences with a love for this unique musical tradition.

In addition to our concert this evening, musicians around the country and around the world are helping to commemorate Jazz Month.

On our sister island, the Tobago Jazz Festival is celebrating its 7th year.

Here in Port of Spain the **Jazz Alliance of Trinidad and Tobago** will host an event at the Hilton this Monday, to highlight and share the importance of jazz and its influence on Trinidad & Tobago’s folk music, as well as broadcast an international concert hosted by Morgan Freeman, followed by a live performance by Tranz and The Sean Thomas Trio.

As for us, the U.S. Embassy and the University of Trinidad and Tobago sponsored a jazz master class here at the Academy of Performing Arts on Tuesday and tomorrow visiting musicians will be working with Divine Echoes and the Holistic Music School band.

Tonight of course, we will be the ones fortunate enough to hear the incredible talents of Master Gunny Sgt Robert Boguslaw on the piano, and Gunnery Sgt Eric Sabo on bass – both from the U.S. Marine Band – the President’s Own.

The U.S. Marine Band was founded more than 200 years ago, in 1798, and Thomas Jefferson, one of our founding fathers, named it ‘The President’s Own’.

My home is in the Washington DC metro area and I have had many chances to hear the U.S. Marine Band perform regularly at the White House, the Kennedy Center and throughout the country.

After I became Ambassador former Secretary of State, General Colin Powell recommended I find a way to bring them here, I'm glad that we made it happen.

In addition, accompanying the two members of the U.S. Marine Band are Brian Kushmaul on the drums and Tamba Gwindi on percussion, they are both from the UTT Faculty of Music, and Jeffrey Wills on the saxophone, visiting from Nashville, TN.

Jeff has been performing for many years. You may have seen him on the Tonight Show, Live at the House of Blues or on HBO.

And finally we have our special guest tonight, one of the greatest steel pan players in the world, please welcome Mr. Len "Boogsie" Sharpe.

So relax and enjoy the timeless sounds of Jazz.

Thank you!