

## Jazzing up Pharos

Tonight the Shoe Factory will leave aside the traditional classical chamber music that it is known for and reverberate to the sounds of Jazz

**T**he Pharos Arts Foundation's latest presentation at Nicosia's Shoe Factory is quartet of highly gifted Cypriot musicians, saxophonist Charis Ioannou, double bassist Michael Messios, pianist Marios Toumbas and drummer Ioannis Vafeas, who share a passion for Jazz.

Jazz is an art form which almost defies definition in its variety of types and styles. In its origins, it was a separate entity but now with a fusion of the elements, we have jazz-rock, latin jazz, acid jazz and several others.

Jazz has been referred to as America's Classical Music and the country's only true art form. Most agree that it developed around the turn of the century primarily among African Americans and had elements of both European and American culture. Although jazz has many of the characteristics of other music, some elements are different. Primarily, it is the treatment of the melody. In fact, anybody can "jazz up" a piece by putting a feeling of triplets

behind the basic beat. Players are then said to be "swinging" the melody. This ability to play in swing style is of utmost importance and a building block for other styles.

Another element is improvisation, the most difficult to master. I always remember being in awe of jazz students at university who would sit at the piano and create an orchestral sound with seemingly endless varieties on the theme, introducing new music, which naturally followed the progressions. The ability to improvise is what separates the great jazz players and leads them to establish their claim to immortality. The primary difference between the classical and jazz students was that where classical students tried to perfect a creation of the past, jazz students expressed their individuality.

Music in its most basic form is sound and rhythm. In jazz, rhythm is very reliant on syncopation, which means that the accent and emphasis falls where one

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least expects it. Although fast tempi are possible, it remains steady.

Saxophonist Charis Ioannou was born in Cyprus but studied and worked in New York until his return to Cyprus in 2005. While in New York, he collaborated with Rick Parker and released a CD 'Rich Parker Collective – New York Gravity'. Back in Cyprus, Ioannou formed various groups including The Cyprus Big Band of which he is the Musical Director. The group has not only performed in Cyprus but in Greece, Kuwait, Poland, the USA and all around Europe. Ioannou current-

ly teaches jazz at the University of Nicosia and with the sponsorship of the Bicomunal Support programme of the US Embassy in Cyprus, and gives workshops and jam sessions island-wide.

Michael Messios, Marios Toumbas and Ioannis Vafeas are graduates from Berkeley and Boston Conservatory. They have all studied with renowned jazz teachers and performed in festivals around the world. Active musicians in Cyprus, they continue to work together as well as teach and pass on their love of jazz in all its forms to the Cyprus public.

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