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Dear Friend of Brecon Jazz

I am delighted to give you further news of **Brecon Jazz Weekend 2016**. Most arrangements are now in place and a small group of dedicated people continues to be preoccupied with ensuring the second weekend in August remains an intoxicating combination of high quality jazz and sunshine in Brecon. I'm much more certain of the jazz.

This year's event, although on a smaller scale to those of the past, promises to be no less a celebration of high class music and there will be a choice of superb live jazz from the evening of Friday 12th August to the evening of Sunday 14th at venues throughout Brecon. The **Friends of Brecon Jazz** clubhouse will be open as usual offering refreshments and a jazz focused sanctuary away from the hurly burly of the festival streets. **Theatr Brycheiniog's** jazz bar will be open for the whole weekend with busking and jamming from some of those appearing on the festival programme and a late night jam session until 3am on Sunday morning.

Three organisations are promoting and staging this year's event - the **Friends of Brecon Jazz (in partnership with Theatr Brycheiniog)**, **Brecon Jazz Club** and **Brecon Cathedral** and in my last update I hinted at a new **FoBJ** initiative. I'm delighted to say that we are now able to give you more details.

Throughout Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th August (thanks to generous sponsorship from the **Brecon Beacons' National Park Authority's Sustainable Development Fund**) the **Friends of Brecon Jazz** in partnership with **Theatr Brycheiniog** will be promoting the **Young Jazz Musicians' Showcase** (working title) at which eight of the UK's most outstanding new bands will be playing. The **Showcase**, the brainchild of **FoBJ** Committee member Marc Edwards, will

see each of the bands performing a full set in the theatre throughout both days starting at 11am. on Saturday morning. Many of the bands are prize winning and/or newly graduated from some of the country's leading conservatoires, some have already played the major London jazz clubs and festivals - **Ronnie Scott's, The Vortex, Wigmore Hall, BBC Proms etc.** and the quality of playing is astonishing. The major jazz stars of tomorrow in the Brecon constellation today. Those engaged to appear (subject to contract) together with their soundfiles are listed here. Don't, however, take my word for the quality of their work, take a listen for yourselves.

Asterope

Featuring an outstanding range of talented musicians this exciting group performs Tom Barford's most recent set of original compositions. Some examples of the influences Tom bases his writing on for this band include Kneebody, Seamus Blake, Donny McCaslin, Kenny Wheeler and Eric Harland. Asterope has played at Ronnie Scott's and Spinney Theatre and several other venues in London <https://soundcloud.com/tom-barford/malicious-meg?in=tom-barford/sets/tom-barford-quintet>

Leiko Quintet

Leiko Quintet focuses on creating fresh, innovative & original music by looking at how rhythmic and harmonic ideas from a contemporary jazz idiom can be used to revive and reinvent pre-existing material. It is bringing a new sound to audiences by fusing ideas from blues, hip-hop and soul with the kind of harmonic framework found in post-bop jazz. The band collectively takes inspiration from artists like Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Robert Glasper & Cory Henry <https://soundcloud.com/liekoquintet>

GSD Ensemble

GSD Ensemble is an 8 piece group that consists of piano, bass guitar, drums, saxophone and string quartet. It plays original music that combines qualities from various genres, notably jazz, classical, Latin and folk, with the aim of engaging audiences in an energetic, uplifting and accessible performance space. In September 2015 GSD recorded its EP, 'Golden Rule', and is weeks away from releasing its first album entitled 'Wildfire' www.gsdensemble.com

Artephis

The '**Jazz North Introduces**' artists of 2015-16, **Artephis** is a Manchester-based contemporary jazz quintet comprising active, award-winning young musicians who met at the Royal Northern College of Music. Since forming in 2014, Artephis has been committed to realizing forward-looking original music, which directs the progressive energy of post-bop Miles Davis and Wynton Marsalis onto the contemporary plane of Christian Scott and Bill Laurence, distilling an eclectic sound of its own.

The band has recently performed to capacity audiences at the Manchester,

Marsden and Lancaster Jazz Festivals, as well as at Matt & Phred's and the Bridgewater Hall. In January 2016, it released its debut EP, and its composition 'Chagrin' is featured on the first ever CD of selected performers at the Marsden Jazz Festival <http://www.jazznorth.org/project/artephis-selected-for-jazz-north-introduces-2015/>

Balha

Balha paints a sonic picture from the broad spectrum of Jewish music traditions, drawing inspiration for new compositions from Liturgical melodies, North African rhythms and Yiddish Art songs. Its music seamlessly combines intimate chamber group textures and roaring, contemporary jazz inspired interplay. It tells a story of the past but always looks ahead, embracing our multi-cultural, modern society. The Group was selected to perform at the BBC Proms in 2015 as a promising emerging band and since then has performed at The Wigmore Hall, The Cockpit Theatre and The Vortex. Their much anticipated debut EP will be available in June.

"Beautifully realized music, calm and ruminative, full of invention and ideas"
Transient Life (2016) www.bahla.co.uk

Waju

Waju is a London-based groove-centered world jazz ensemble that encapsulates influences from West African music, but with a particular focus on the music of Mali.

The band plays the original music of drummer/percussionist Ben Brown which combines the exceptional spirit of the likes of Ali Farka Toure, Oumou Sangare, Tinariwen & Baba Sissoko with the spontaneity of jazz harmony & improvisation. Comprising Sam Rapley – tenor saxophone, Tal Janes – guitar, Misha Mullov-Abbado – bass, Ernesto Marichales – percussion & Ben on drums, the quintet brings the uniquely nuanced grooves of styles like Wassoulou & the 'Desert Blues' into a jazz context - resulting in an undeniably energetic performance! www.waju.co.uk

Dani Sicari and The Easy Rollers

1920s speakeasy jazz featuring award-winning musicians from RNCM.

"Grab your dancin' shoes 'cos the 20s are here to stay!"

On January 17th 1920 the USA goes cold turkey, as a constitutional ban is placed on the sale and production of alcoholic beverages. As saloons across the country shut down, illegal speakeasy bars take their place and the Prohibition era is born. Jazz music from New Orleans reaches the big cities and floods into the underground speakeasies, along with illicit liquor and scantily-clad women <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zloTrhQaMyg>

Duwallly

Dan Abrahams, Rachel Walker, Phil Alexander and Graham Coe are delighted to have recently released their debut album of all original material. Their individual backgrounds - a mix of jazz, klezmer, Scottish trad and classical music - all contribute to the "fabulous musicianship" of this band who played their thrillingly

energetic set to a sold-out Edinburgh Fringe audience in August 2015. **Duwally's** unique and expressive folk sound has been described as "a lovely breath of fresh air". Guitar, fiddle, accordion and cello weave and dance together to create gritty grooves, joyous melodies and soaring harmonies, with improvisational sections that speak from the soul <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvQDiBJdGpM&nohtml5=False>
Richard Michael, Professor of Jazz St Andrew's University
History of Jazz Piano <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLGjBmFyR1E> a highly entertaining lecture/demonstration on just what it says.

Not only are the **Friends** helping these bands on their professional ways but again in partnership with **Theatr Brycheiniog** we shall be presenting a headline bill of British jazz stars on Saturday evening. **Dennis Rollin's Velocity Trio** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFjlcodWFLs> with Mark Mondesir on drums will be the headline act supported by Nerija <https://soundcloud.com/nerijamusic> an all female septet and **JazzFM breakthrough act 2016** nominee. Some of you may have heard the band at **Ronnie Scott's** last October.

We are delighted with the **FoBJ** programme and heartfelt thanks must go to Elizabeth Jeffreys, **FoBJ** Committee member, who has been central to the fund raising that has enabled us to contribute to this year's festival and Marc Edwards for sourcing the bands and creating the programme. Generous sponsorship from **Jazz for Jed** has enabled us to stage the headline acts at **Theatr Brycheiniog** on Saturday night.

The **FoBJ** initiative is only one feature of this year's events, however, and both **Brecon Jazz Club** and **Brecon Cathedral** will once again be presenting their banquets of top class music.

Brecon Jazz Club

For the festival weekend, **Brecon Jazz Club** is offering a menu of concerts, workshops and interesting activities centred on the splendid centre of town **Guildhall Theatre**, with two more key town venues, an iconic 'jazz festival' space, the **Castle Ballroom**, and one new in the community and music network - **The Muse**, used for great music and workshops:

- Friday evening, **Castle Hotel Ballroom** : Big Band, vocals, guest soloists, dancing - to open the weekend
- Saturday evening highlight : Vocal headline and Wales-UK sounds of Brazil jazz lineup (**Guildhall**)
- Sunday evening highlight : Award-winning rising stars of the horns with special guest (**Guildhall**)

There will be workshops for all ages and levels, in guitar, voice, percussion, and general music-making for all, a film screening and discussion, and exhibitions on music and social contexts around jazz. Full details will be released next month, subject to funding outcomes. Lynne Gornall, **Brecon Jazz Club**

(Brecon Jazz Club is also looking for volunteer Front of House staff for the festival weekend. If you are able to assist please contact Lynne Gornall or Roger Cannon at Brecon Jazz Club at info@breconjazzclub.org FoH training at the venue and free entry to the gig(s) at which you are officiating.)

Brecon Cathedral

The wonderful acoustics of the ***Cathedral*** will also be enhancing two headline concerts on Saturday and Sunday evenings (subject to funding) and of course, the ***Cathedral*** will be holding its regular, uplifting jazz service on Sunday morning.

Programming

The joys of a jazz festival are often tempered by the frustration of a programme that sees the musicians one particularly wants to hear performing in different venues at the same time. All three organisations contributing to this year's event are working hard to ensure this happens as little as possible, particularly in relation to the headline acts on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Indicative programme courtesy of Lynne Gornall, Brecon Jazz Club, attached.

Website

The **Brecon Jazz Weekend 2016** website will be up and running shortly and will carry the full weekend programme. I shall contact you again immediately it is accessible.

Ticketing

Ticketing for all events will be available in advance via the website. During the festival, tickets will be available from the venues themselves and hopefully, from a festival information office in the centre of town.

So there you have it. I very much hope the programme tickles your musical enthusiasm and taste and that you are able to join us for what promises to be another wonderful weekend of jazz and (thanks to generous sponsorship from ***Brecon Town Council***) street theatre for children and families in Brecon from 12th - 14th August.

Please do, get back to me if any of this is unclear or you would like to talk any aspect of the festival through further.

In the meantime, the best of all wishes until we meet up again in Brecon.

Sean Williams

Chair, Friends of Brecon Jazz