

In Tribute to New Orleans Institution, Baton Is Passed to New Fans

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The [Preservation Hall Jazz Band](#), a quintessential New Orleans institution, discovered new out-of-town admirers after Hurricane Katrina, and it brought many of them along for a concert on Saturday night at Carnegie Hall to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Preservation Hall, at 726 St. Peter Street, started in 1961 as a place where longtime New Orleans musicians could play the city's most traditional jazz. It gathered a core Preservation Hall Jazz Band that performs regularly at the hall itself, with personnel gradually changing through the years.

Ben Jaffe, the bassist and sousaphone player who is the group's current creative director, is the son of the band's previous director, Allan Jaffe. Other members, including the drummer Joe Lastie, the trombonist Freddie Lonzo and the clarinetist Charlie Gabriel, come from multigenerational musical families.

After the devastation of New Orleans in 2005, jam bands, indie-rockers, and fellow long-running traditional groups supported and collaborated with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. The largest project was "Preservation: An Album to Benefit Preservation Hall and the Preservation Hall Music Outreach Program," a two-CD collection released in 2010.

At Carnegie Hall the Blind Boys of Alabama, the Del McCoury Band, My Morning Jacket, Steve Earle, Merrill Garbus of Tune-Yards, and Yasiin Bey (formerly Mos Def) were on hand. So were the New Orleans-born musicians [Trombone Shorty](#) and [Allen Toussaint](#), who sang a tribute to the band for putting "pride in your stride."

While it's a paradox that welcoming outsiders and trying out hybrids is a survival tactic for a deeply local tradition, that's a fact of life for present-day New Orleans.

At Carnegie Hall the Preservation Hall Jazz Band showed how easily it could hop from era to era. It could work like a rhythm-and-blues horn section or a tightly arranged little big band if need be, but it could also switch back into the polyphonic glories of vintage New Orleans jazz, in which nearly every instrument seems to improvise around the tune at the same time.

That's what the band did on its own, in standards like "Bourbon Street Parade" (sung by its trumpeter, Mark Braud) and, even more exuberantly, backing excerpts from [the Trey McIntyre Project's](#) dance suite "Ma Maison," with members in skeleton masks and harlequin costumes. The band also brought a New Orleans shimmy and wink to some of its guests: Tiffany Lamson of the Louisiana band Givers with "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," and Ms. Garbus belting "Careless Love."

The band was more somber for a doleful version of “St. James Infirmary” sung by Jim James of My Morning Jacket; the song then turned upbeat for a return of the dancers. For Mr. Earle’s “This City,” a tribute to New Orleans, the band deferred to his roots rock. But there was a dialogue between traditions when Mr. McCoury’s bluegrass band shared songs with Preservation Hall; clarinet and fiddle traded solos that stayed true to their own idioms, while the rhythm meshed.

A big finale filled the stage as the Blind Boys of Alabama; Mr. McCoury; and Preservation Hall’s saxophonist, Clint Maedgen, took turns singing the gospel standard “I’ll Fly Away,” backed by the night’s full roster.

But after the guests cleared away, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band returned, along with teenage musicians from its Preservation Hall Junior Jazz Band, whose members get lessons from the elder band Musical Outreach. They played — of course — “When the Saints Go Marching In,” with an old-fashioned polyphonic swagger that promised continuity for another New Orleans generation.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/10/arts/music/preservation-hall-jazz-band-at-carnegie-hall-review.html>