

## The People's Critic

David Dow Bentley III

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### "LE JAZZ" is Oh-So-Hot at 59E59 Theaters

Posted on [December 17, 2013](#)



L – R: Peter Anderson and Will Anderson in LE JAZZ HOT: HOW THE FRENCH SAVED JAZZ at 59E59 Theaters. Photo by Eileen O'Donnell

For those of us fortunate enough to have seen 2012's *The Anderson Twins Play the Fabulous Dorseys\**, it would come as no surprise that the lads' latest offering at Manhattan's trendy 59E59 Theaters would be packed with dazzling musicianship. For their current production, the boys have written and directed, **LE JAZZ HOT: How the French Saved Jazz**. The show is every inch a celebration, but it is really much more than that. Complementing the brilliant music, this is really a tour of highlights from jazz history, peppered with fascinating stories of the composers and performers who were central figures in the process the title aptly describes as "How the French Saved Jazz."

The talented quintet assembled for this delightful journey features Clovis Nicolas on bass, Luc Decker on drums, and Randy Napoleon on guitar, with the Andersons leading the way as both narrators and performers (Will plays alto sax, clarinet & flute, while Pete shines on tenor sax, clarinet and bass clarinet). Some performances will feature Alex Wintz on guitar, Neal Miner on bass and Phil Stewart on drums.

The amusingly droll and friendly narrative banter from the handsome and charming twins is carried off with a gentle ease that creates a delightful connection with the audience. But there is an informative and serious aspect

to the proceedings as we are really treated to a minor seminar on jazz evolution that musically celebrates such notables in the field as Django Reinhardt ("Rhythm Futur," "Swing 42"), Sidney Bechet ("Petite Fleur," "Promenade Aux Champs Elysées,"), Josephine Baker ("There's A Small Hotel"), Louis Armstrong ("La Vie En Rose," "C'est Si Bon"), Duke Ellington ("Paris Blues," "Degas Suite") Dizzy Gillespie ("Afro Paris," "Tour de Paris"), Kenny Clarke ("Rue Chaptal"), and Bud Powell ("Parisian Thoroughfare"). The group's musicianship in these samplings is consistently superb.

Sometimes adding interest and variety to the show is a delightful selection of antique silent film clips like the faded B&W print that opens the program as a shabby bass player sits down to play his instrument on a Paris street, and is then bombarded by assorted trash being hurled at him from the surrounding windows by apartment dwellers who do not appreciate his music. Another creatively included clip was the charming 6-minute film segment from "The Red Balloon," which provided a fascinating tip-of-the-hat to the influence of Claude Debussy as the talented quintet accompanied with a jazzy interpretation of "Clair de Lune."

There are countless interesting jazz age tales including war stories of Nazi contempt for the freedoms associated with jazz music. We learn of the many hardships faced by artists like Bud Powell whose troubled life inspired the 1986 film, "'Round Midnight." From the 1961 motion picture, "Paris Blues" (starring Paul Newman and Sidney Poitier), there was another intriguing film clip accompanying the show's segment on Duke Ellington. And speaking of Paris, I would say a highlight of the performance was the brilliant guitar solo of "April in Paris," from the gifted Mr. Napoleon. (Lower right hand corner of photo above). Though he looks like a teenager, this experienced pro teaches guitar as a faculty member at the University of Michigan and has toured widely with many jazz greats including both Michael Bubl  and the quartet of Freddy Cole (Younger brother of Nat King Cole). Napoleon's remarkable virtuosity on guitar must be seen and heard to be believed.

Patrons are reminded that seating in the small, cabaret-style theater is quite snug, but in this season of good cheer, this show is sure to add to your joy. In closing, I find myself hoping some sharp producers will scoop up the Anderson Twins and their talented colleagues for two projects.



L – R: Peter Anderson and Will Anderson in LE JAZZ HOT: HOW THE FRENCH SAVED JAZZ at 59E59 Theaters. Photo by Eileen O'Donnell

First, I recommend a PBS television special that would allow wider exposure for these talented performers and this very educational, “Le Jazz Hot.” Secondly, I would love to see a first-class remake of the classic film, “Those Fabulous Dorseys.” These guys are ready in every way.

\* *The earlier FABULOUS DORSEY BROTHERS review is available at:*

<http://thepeoplescritic.com/2012/09/19/twin-talents-shine-in-those-fabulous-dorseys/>

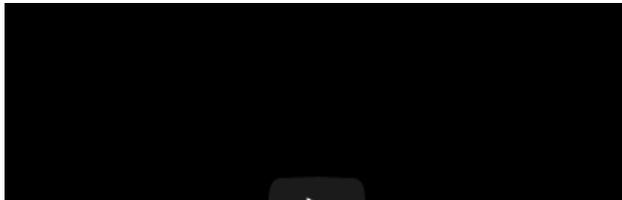
**LE JAZZ HOT: How the French Saved Jazz** continues through December 29<sup>th</sup> at 59E59 Theaters, 59 East 59<sup>th</sup> St., New York City. The performance schedule is Tuesday-Thursday at 7:30 PM; Friday at 8:30 PM; Saturday at 5:30 PM & 8:30 PM; and Sunday at 3:30 PM and 7:30 PM. [NOTE: No performance on December 25<sup>th</sup> but an additional performance on Friday, December 27<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM.] Tickets are \$35 (\$24.50 for 59E59 Members).

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**About The People's Critic**

David Dow Bentley III, writes columns about the performing arts which are featured in newspapers from the East Coast to the Gulf Coast. A member of the Lambs Club, he is also editor of The Lambs' Script. Mr. Bentley may be contacted via e-mail at [ThePeoplesCritic@earthlink.net](mailto:ThePeoplesCritic@earthlink.net).

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December 18, 2013 at 10:45 am

It's shows like these that make me miss NY. :) Great review.

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