



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the International Jazz Day

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Martin Luther King Jr. once said that “jazz speaks for life.” This is the spirit of the first *International Jazz Day*.

Jazz has defied almost every attempt at definition. The music critic John Fordham may have captured it best when he described the music of Miles Davis as “the sound of the skipped heart-beat, the caught breath, the sudden smile.”

Jazz is music of boundless creativity. Mixing composition and improvisation, the formal and informal, it renews itself every time it is played. Born in the United States, jazz is owned by the world. Rooted in African traditions and drawing on European musical forms, it has taken on new shapes in cultures across the globe. Jazz makes the most of the world's diversity, effortlessly crossing borders and bringing people together.

Jazz has been a force for positive social transformation throughout its history, and it remains so today. This is why UNESCO created *International Jazz Day*. From its roots in slavery, this music has raised a passionate voice against all forms of oppression. It speaks a language of freedom that is meaningful to all cultures. The same goals guide UNESCO in its efforts to build bridges of dialogue and understanding between all cultures and societies. We work with governments and societies and also with artists, including Herbie Hancock, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. Making the most of cultural diversity is a task we all share.

This is why this first *International Jazz Day* will be celebrated with concerts across the world, from Muscat to Moscow, Yerevan to Havana, Paris and New York to New Orleans. Each of these concerts will display the power of jazz to enhance human

dignity, respect and peace. Each is a moment to share the wonders that come from the sound of the skipped heart-beat, the caught breath, the sudden smile.

Jazz connects people, cultures and the world. This is our message.

Irina Bokova