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Two Weeks at New World: FESTIVAL EXPLORES HARLEM RENAISSANCE IN EUROPE



New World Symphony's "I Dream a World: The Harlem Renaissance in Europe" takes its name from Langston Hughes' 1941 poem. As Hughes writes in "I Dream a World," "I dream a world where black or white, whatever race you be, will share the bounties of the earth."

For festival organizers, music and art are the bounties and their power lies in connecting people of all races through a look back at the Harlem Renaissance in Europe.

The festival, running from Friday, Feb. 3 through Wednesday, Feb. 15 at the New World Center in Miami Beach, focuses on music, visual arts and poetry dating from the late 19th century through the 1930s. "This music is going to reveal that in that spirit of perseverance (a century ago) there was also joy, and as long as you don't allow people to take your joy, no matter what they do or say to you, that is a powerful message," says Tammy Kernodle, musicologist and professor at Miami University in Ohio, who is curating the festival. "That is what this music exemplifies, that hope and joy."

Through art, the Harlem Renaissance spearheaded social progression. Artists moved to Europe to be able to be seen as artists.

"African American artists that fled to Paris were vast (and) just to think that a Black man from Philly moved to Paris in the 1880s so he could be free to be himself," says Christopher Norwood, of Henry Ossawa Tanner, whose works are featured in an exhibition that is on display throughout the festival. "(Tanner) was a beacon for African-American artists in America and for those who later followed his lead

February 2, 2023

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in the next century through the Jazz age to sojourn to Paris where liberty and dignity were more available.”

Norwood is curator and founder of Hampton Art Lovers which operates the Historic Ward Rooming House gallery in Overtown. He curated the exhibition “Le Paris Noir: Henry Ossawa Tanner and Lois Mailou Jones.” Jones, a female African American artist also went to France to seek artistic freedom. The works from The Norwood Collection will be on display in the New World Center’s Atrium Lobby. “Culture is a currency,” says Norwood, “Our ability to understand each other advances community, business and humanity.”

In its second year, the festival continues its focus on creating a deeper connection with South Florida’s community.

Kernodle who works as a preservationist and uncovers history through archival work, says she has been working with NWS to make the festival more inclusive.

“(NWS) wants to create a relationship with the larger Miami community, particularly with black and brown people,” says Kernodle. “This has become part of a larger DE&I (diversity, equity and inclusion) initiative; that says something about how they envision this festival.”

NWS has long strived to make inclusion an important part of its makeup.

“We search for talent everywhere and when you do that you begin to see an orchestra that becomes ever more inclusive (in) gender, ethnic background and geographic distribution,” says Howard Herring, President and CEO of New World Symphony. “Then came the murder of George Floyd and there was a new sense of urgency.”

Like George Floyd, other names are forever etched into history. There’s American bandleader James Reese Europe, who is credited with bringing ragtime and jazz to European audiences for the first time, and who was a member of the Harlem Hellfighters, the first all-Black infantry that fought in World War I. On Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 7:30 p.m., Grammy award-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis will be leading “The Sound Heard Around the World” tribute concert to American bandleader Reese Europe. Also, The Hellfighters’ journey is chronicled in the documentary “The Harlem Hellfighters Great War,” which will be shown for free in New World Center’s SoundScape Park on the giant WALLCAST® screen at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15, as part of the festival.

“I think people will be shocked to see these Black men fighting for democracy and not having freedom at home . . . being celebrated in France, being credited with being part of the allied victory, but coming back (to America) and being stripped of that and some of them being lynched,” says Kernodle. The Equal Justice Initiative, through its research found that thousands of Black veterans were assaulted, threatened, abused and lynched following military service. According to the Initiative, the veterans were seen as a threat to Jim Crow and racial subordination. “There are some bad and good things that are a

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part of our history, that's why I love history, because it can be the pathway to deeper understanding," says Kernodle.

Although heavy in topic at times, the festival is meant to be uplifting, motivating, and family friendly. On Sunday, Feb. 12 at 11:30 a.m., Chad Goodman, a New World Symphony conducting fellow, leads a program of jazz, blues and ragtime in "Concert for Kids: I Dream a World," in New World's Michael Tilson Thomas Performance Hall. The concert, according to organizers, is designed for children ages 4 to 9 years old.

"I am hoping (the festival) will build understanding of who we are (as Americans), but also facilitate specific conversations that need to happen in order for us to survive or navigate what are some very difficult and polarizing times," says Kernodle.

WHAT: *New World Symphony presents "I Dream a World: The Harlem Renaissance in Europe"*

WHERE: *New World Center, 500 17th St., Miami Beach*

WHEN: *Friday, Feb. 3 through Wednesday, Feb. 15*

COST: *\$15, \$20, \$25, \$60, \$85, \$95, depending on seats and performance. \$100 festival passes available, \$150 sold out.*

INFORMATION: *305-673-3330 or nws.edu*