



Oaxaca Times

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Street Songs



Music



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Check out Temple

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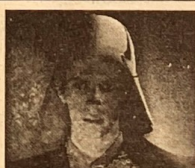
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LEARN SPANISH AT THE ICC: OAXACA'S BEST LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Communion

Jazz service for the unbelievers

By Elizabeth Wu

Jazz is a prayer. Sometimes it is a plea for mercy. Sometimes it is a baptism. Sometimes it is a cry of ecstasy. Always it is a reminder of our humanity, of our roots, of our troubles and of our ability to improve — it is a song of survival.

Springing from fields of broken hearts and dreams, jazz grew to the rhythm of work songs, the harmony of gospel choirs, the whisper of lullabies and the chaos of the streets. Its mes-

sengers were prophets, pimps and preachers alike, holding service on street corners, in brothels, in speakeasies, in living rooms with the same passion as in the great dance halls and elite nightclubs.

Jazz grew in the underworld, a

dark pool reflecting the collective unconscious.



During wartime it was the battle cry of soldiers, a rite of passage for swing-era teens, the music of the masses. Postwar it became political, ideologic, cool, nihilistic, spacious, frenzied, spaced-out, psychedelic, funky, atonal ... from Ma Rainey to Armstrong to Gillespie to Miles to Mingus to Coltrane to Corea to the latest hipster doin his thang on the rickety floor of your nearest jam session, these voices bear testimony to the wonders and horrors we hold in our blood, all crying out for recognition, redemption, resurrection.

Real jazz is raw. You don't get it by listening to records or by going to a conservatory. It doesn't live in a museum. It doesn't exist in a pile of notes or a carefully rehearsed vocal inflection. It definitely isn't a theory, nor a formula. Jazz is the art of bloodletting. You can fake tears, love or an orgasm, but you can't fake soul. Don't be fooled.

That's why you don't need a book or a fancy degree to understand jazz — it isn't about knowing the difference between the phrygian, the locrian and the sharp eleven flat thirteen — it's about communion.

Today, jazz is a language that many no longer under-

stand, and even fewer speak. It's like an endangered species, trying to survive in an environment polluted by smooth, computer-generated mass media brainwashing material. For all you children of today, be warned — real jazz is almost never piped in through elevators or phone systems. Why? Because it makes people uneasy. Sure, sometimes a sermon can be sweet, but often it's fire and brimstone. Jazz isn't afraid to call it as it is, be it fat, ugly or stinky.

Say the raspiness of the blues gets you down, be bop makes you dizzy and acid jazz gives you a headache. Don't reach for your dictionary of scales or your Bratany Spears CD. Just sit back and listen. That song is telling you something about heartache, about longing, about midday traffic in New York, sleep deprivation, a lousy job, a woman in a short dress, a stranger. It's telling you something about life. Everyone knows the blues, even if they don't recognize the tune when they hear it. So if jazz just "doesn't make sense" to you, if it's grating, uncomfortable, rough or too complex ... be sure that before you dismiss it that you aren't in fact denying something in your own life you prefer not to face. If you are, that's OK, but don't blame it on the music.

Jazz at Temple

Gourmet food meets great music

By Elizabeth Wu

I admit it: I'm a jazz buff. When I was nine, practicing out of my red beginner's trumpet book, I used to play the untitled "study in blues" over and over, just to hear that sweet flatted fifth. When my lesson teacher pulled out *Au Privave*, I used to go out on the porch and work on my syncopation until the sun went down. When I hit high school, they showed me the blues scale. Then I went to the conservatory, and had to unlearn it all — we weren't allowed to play that tacky scale. By the time I graduated, I was told to claim it back — the blues, that is, not the scale.

After four years sweating out those bebop riffs at lightning speed and trying to compose for the big band, I left those white institutional walls stripped bare. All those chords had sunk into my skin, yet I didn't even have enough life experience to out-blues a crusty old street musician. So I went on the road to try and get some. It worked, but I had long exchanged the trumpet for the vibes, and this was not an instrument I could carry with me. I spent years traveling and working, unable to play — it drove me crazy. Finally, the road led me to Oaxaca, where, needless to say, I was excited and grateful to find a lively and growing jazz scene. There are a number of venues here where one can listen to young budding musicians as well as established players, which I will list sometime in the future.

For the time being though, I'd like to share with you one of the hippest places I've found to hear quality jazz, as well as get some fantastic food: Temple.

When you walk in, you know if you belong — the art on the walls, the post-modern decor and the music tell you right away what the theme is: fusion. Fusion is about taking the best of two or three things, and mixing them in a way that creates something new and unique. If you hate everything except your old Bing Crosby LPs, thrive on a patently predictable lifestyle, dream in grays and browns and prefer your food out of a can, don't bother leaving your armchair and threadbare slippers. Temple is absolutely contemporary — chic colors, experimental cuisine, stylish decor and modern live music. To enter, bring an appetite for the new.

Their food is a mix of traditional Mexican with Western gourmet, with a healthy dash of risk-taking. Where else would you find Ostrich with wild mushrooms and hazelnuts on the menu?

What I like most about Temple, however good the food is (and I recommend the fish), is that the owners have made a commitment to showcasing the best jazz they can find. They generally schedule live music every two weeks, mostly on the weekend. Their musicians (which are always trained professionals) hail from all over the country. Some of the artists featured in the



last year include: Arquímidez Hernández, Rodrigo Castellanos, Alvaro Torres, Salvador Patiño, Josué Amador, Arturo Báen and Ricardo Fernández, among others. The common factor among all their different styles is that they are all part of a new generation of Mexican modern jazz, a mix of be-bop, acid jazz and concert music.

The addition of jazz to the menu has been relatively recent — something they started just a year ago. In the future, they hope to present groups from outside the country as well, not only to entertain their customers, but to preserve and promote the tradition of jazz in Oaxaca. If you are a jazz buff, a food connoisseur or just looking to have a good time in a stylish setting, I highly recommend checking out Temple.

Coming in June, the quartet *Magos Herrera*, a group with international renown. Contact: Temple, García Vigil 409-A, centro, 516 8676 info@restaurantemple.com