

North Shore Jazz Features a Soul Steeped in the Culture of "The Big Easy"

Jennifer Nesselroad



North Shore Jazz in partnership with the Vancouver International Jazz Festival (VIJF) is back for its fifth edition of another program of eclectic, acoustic music featuring international and local artists alike. The VIJF has a strong New Orleans theme this year with such artists as Dr John, Allen Toussaint, and the Preservation Hall Band. North Shore Jazz will also feature one of New Orleans' native sons – one of the sweetest vocalists from the region – John Boutté.

Boutté's soulful style is a unique blend that could only come from a place like New Orleans. Often compared to the likes of Sam Cooke and Little Jimmy Scott, this smoky tenor will be joined by Vancouver's own Universal Gospel Choir on July 2 at the Capilano College Performing Arts Theatre. Not only is this the first pairing of John Boutté and the very popular local Universal Gospel Choir, it will be John's first trip to Vancouver.

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A seventh generation New Orleanian, John Boutté was exposed to the soulful sounds of the city from a young age. With a church directly behind his childhood home, he heard the voices from over the fence and was drawn to it. John became an accomplished pianist at a young age and played coronet and trumpet in his junior

high and high school marching bands. He was a section leader, no less, in a town where marching bands duel like decked-out demons in the street. He also sang – first at talent shows and then with street a capella groups.

John's youth was immersed in the music of his older brothers and sisters, the music that ruled the street and raised the spirits: Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, the Jackson 5, Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway. During these years traditional jazzmen like Paul Babarin, Louis "Big Eye" Nelson and Danny Barker became his friends and mentors. John's sister Lillian introduced him to local legends like Dr. John, Allen Toussaint and James Booker.

John Boutté also has a solid gospel background that includes various collaborations with gospel choirs. As an officer in the U. S. Army, he directed and sang in the Army gospel choirs in Virginia, Texas and, eventually, Korea. Years later he performed in Denmark with 1,000 Danish children to record, *Gospel United*. This concert recording achieved Gold Record status in several European markets.

Since then, John has opened shows for Mel Torme, Lou Rawls, Rosemary Clooney and, most recently, Herbie Hancock. He has recorded six albums: *Mardi Gras Mambo*, *At The Foot Of Canal Street*, *Scotch and Soda* and *Jambalaya*. Most recently, he was a part of the New Orleans all-star collaboration *Take Me Back Home*, a response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Choosing the right material – songs that move him – is vital to John Boutté. After all, "Gospel is one of my fortes and I don't play [around] with that."

WHAT: John Boutté at the North Shore Jazz Fest

WHEN: Sunday, July 2 @ 8pm

WHERE: Capilano College Performing Arts Theatre

HOW: Tickets available through Ticketmaster, 604.280.4444 or the jazz hotline at 604.872.5200, website - www.coastaljazz.ca or www.capcollege.bc.ca/theatre, Tickets: \$25/\$23.