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Musicians pay tribute to Gillespie

By: **Chris Smith**

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IF you're going to celebrate the music and playing of trumpet great Dizzy Gillespie, it's good to get out front with a punchy tune, one that illustrates his skill and joie de vivre.

Sunday afternoon, in the middle concert of three over the weekend, Blue n' Boogie fit the bill as trumpeter Marcus Printup, baritone saxophonist Gary Smulyan, pianist Edward Simon, bassist Steve Kirby and drummer Dafnis Prieto paid tribute to Gillespie, whose career spanned the 1940s to 1993.

Smulyan and Printup opened the tune with short solos before the trumpeter took the spotlight with a terrific solo, hitting the high notes and the passing it back to Smulyan for another great solo, if not as fiery by the nature of the bari. Simon and Kirby added good solos before Prieto finished it off with a kick-ass drum solo. It was the kind of start to a concert that Gillespie would have been proud of.

Another popular Gillespie tune, Woody n' You, showcased the talents of the band members, but especially the Cuban-born, New York-based Prieto who got the solo spot he deserved, a tour de force of drumming that thrilled the audience and gave it something to think about during intermission.

And right after the break, Prieto stole the show again when the band played Manteca, Gillespie's well-known Afro-Cuban masterpiece.

It was trumpeter Printup, of course who carried the heaviest load in a tribute to Gillespie, and his soloing all afternoon was exemplary; showcasing or subtle, as needed, but always with an ear to the big man's own talent.

The inclusion of a baritone sax in this band was a great idea, and Smulyan, who played in Gillespie's United Nation Orchestra, was the perfect fit. Not only is he familiar with Gillespie's music, he wields that big horn with such skill and gusto.

As if to emphasize Smulyan's versatility, he was given a duo spot with pianist Simon on Round Midnight, a sublime rendition with the two musicians melding their solos into each other's and reminding the audience that Gillespie wasn't all high notes and speed.

It wouldn't be a celebration of Gillespie without tunes such as Tin Tin Deo, I can't Get Started, Tour de Force, Con Alma and, of course, the closing number A Night in Tunisia, easily one of his more recognizable and most covered compositions.

Con Alma, whose title translates as *With Soul*, was just that in the hands of Simon, who performed it with a delicacy and dexterity that was marvellous to hear.

chris.smith@freepress.mb.ca

Concert Review

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