NEW IASJ PHONE AND FAX NUMBERS

Since October, the IASJ has new phone numbers:
The general number of the Service Bureau: +31.70.315.1515
The direct number of Walter Turkenburg: +31.70.315.1400
The direct number of Odette Bruinzeel:+31.70.315.1484
Our fax number has also changed: +31.70.315.1518
Our email address remains the same: servicebureau@iasj.com

From the editor

Author Jim Collier once noticed that there are many similarities between an athlete running a race and a jazz musician playing a piece of music. Both go through a series of rituals before they go into action. The jazz musician and the athlete seem to be in a certain mindset during the peak of their activities. At the end they return to earth satisfied and tired after the last bar line or lap. The psychological, physical and all other relationships between jazz and sports are worth investigating. It can lead to important insights in how both forms of activity work. Other than that, there is no relation between them because sports are concerned with competition, jazz is not.

However, in the last year at the IASJ Service Bureau more announcements of jazz competitions have come in the mail than ever before. Jazz competitions and contests come in all sorts. The worst are the ones that are clearly a pretext for having a bunch of good and willing students playing to please a paying crowd while in the mean time some smart guy or organization is making big money. These kinds of competitions are never announced in the IASJ Newsletter. More difficult cases are the competitions that are organized by good and willing amateurs who have no idea about jazz but wholeheartedly wish to do anything to make their jazz competitions look like something really worthwhile. It could be nice for a student to participate, win a worthless prize, be the king of the hill for one day, and maybe gain experience. Although there is seldom money to be earned, it does not hurt to return home with some international contacts, a t-shirt, a misspelled diploma, a bad paying local gig in the far future and a poster in a foreign language. These competitions have my sympathy and quite often they make it to the Bulletin Board of the IASJ Newsletter.

The really excellent competitions are always announced in the IASJ Newsletter. A knowledgeable jury is not given any information beforehand and listens to recordings in the preliminary rounds in order to select a number of possible candidates for the finals. In the last round the selected groups perform live in front of an audience and a jury decides who are the winners for the soloists, group and composition prize. Only a few competitions are like this.

All in all there are just a few competitions in jazz. In popular music however things have gone completely out of control. Television formats called "Idols" in Great Britain, Holland and other countries in Europe, "Star Search" in The U.S., the format "Superstar" in Germany, and the endless series of competitions on commercial television in Italy show that there is an enormous need for new stars. In these pop music competitions the music is unimportant. The repertoire is chosen completely at random and serves only to fit the image of the pop star on the make. Not the best musician wins and not even the best talent but the one who appeals the most to the audience. No longer is the winner elected by a diligent jury but by e-mailing or mobile phone using the public that votes under suspicious conditions. None of the pop music competitions have anything to do with jazz but in both there seems to be an enormous need for new faces and new stars.

I do not think that the future big names in jazz are found at these contests but rather at IASJ Jazz Meetings. Having been on juries of all kinds of jazz competitions, I would rather listen to groups performing at the IASJ Jazz Meeting Final Concerts than at jazz competitions however sincerely and objectively organized. Within the next few weeks the CD of recordings of the IASJ Jazz Meeting 2002 in Helsinki, Finland will fall on your doorstep and you can make the judgment yourself.

WALTER TURKENBURG
editor