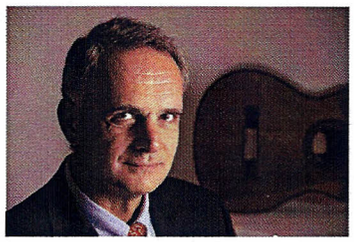
FROM THE EDITOR



This summer the 17th Annual IASJ Jazz Meeting took place in Siena, Italy. It is the third time that the Siena Jazz Foundation has hosted this meeting. Statistically, this makes Italy equal with the USA regarding in which country the meetings have most frequently taken place. The USA was the leading country with three meetings: New York in 1995, Boston 2001 and Louisville in 2006. All three IASJ Jazz Meetings in Italy, in 1992, 1997 and 2007 have been organized in one place: in Siena. The host was the Siena Jazz Foundation, celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

Why so often in Italy? One might think that the IASJ did not know of any other places to go. Indeed, this was the case the second time the meeting took place in Siena in 1997 when the IASJ really had no idea where to go that year. Nowadays the IASJ Jazz Meetings are planned at least five years ahead. There is no shortage of schools that want to host the meeting. Siena Jazz requested to host the 2007 IASJ Annual IASJ Jazz Meeting a long time ago. The main reason was that the school is in existence for thirty years in 2007. This can be considered quite a long time if one bears in mind that the big boom of jazz schools in Europe took place from the mid eighties onwards. Siena Jazz at that time was ten years ahead of the international movement. In the late seventies however, Siena Jazz was, if I recall correctly, nothing more than a small two or three room private music school in the middle of the city located in the Via Sancta Maria. The first faxes I received told me that the organization had moved to the Fortezza. Ok, a fortress, a bunker: it sounded like a good and safe place to me, but the location turned out to be a forgotten, abandoned and worn out building. An elementary school had just moved out because the conditions were unbearable for any kind of teaching. "Good enough for Jazz" everybody must have thought at first, but Franco Caroni clearly thought otherwise, so he started working on the place straight away. Egg boxes where replaced by special acoustic material and later by high tech acoustic walls. The overstuffed room that once was called the library has become a multi-room documentation centre of Italian jazz that is an example to the world. In this vast documentation space you can even find the Benedetti records of Charlie Parker that are missing on the so called 'complete' Mosaic Recordings. The 17th Annual IASJ Jazz Meeting 2007 was the most professionally organized jazz meeting of all. The students could rehearse under outstanding conditions, the teachers could teach, rehearse and play to a high professional level, and the discussions of the representatives gave clear visions on the future of jazz education. The 'contradas', ancient communities which have been a part of the city for more than one thousand years, provided food and a place to have jam sessions, and the inner court of the Fortezza was a perfect place for the teacher's concert and the two final concerts. There was a nicely presented and clear website with all the necessary information for the meeting, big posters all over town, video recordings of the final concerts, and on the group photo you can see not only all of the participants but also the wives and children and friends and guests that shared the experience. The IASJ Jazz Meeting is not just a gathering, it is an event.

The success of Siena Jazz mirrors the success of jazz education at large. The growth of this founding member of the IASJ is exemplary for the growth of the entire IASJ. Like Siena Jazz, the IASJ has become a major player in the jazz world. Siena Jazz is no longer an "excuse-me-that-I-am-there" kind of place in a "good-enough-for-jazz" building, and a "hope-I-will-survive" kind of future. On the last day of the 17th IASJ Jazz Meeting 2007 Director France Caroni announced that, after talking to the government ministry, he had high hopes that Siena Jazz could in the near future become the first private music university to specialize in jazz in Italy. If there is a school of jazz that deserves this enormous recognition then it is Siena Jazz.

Walter Turkenburg

Editor