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American Jazz Elite Come for Triumph of Jazz Festival

By Alexander Stirling

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Jazz fusion quartet Yellojackets are one of the top draws at the festival.

Russia's most famous jazzman, Igor Butman, will lead the Moscow Jazz Orchestra on Saturday and Sunday as the 15th Triumph of Jazz festival welcomes top world artists to Moscow.

Veteran American jazz fusion quartet Yellowjackets, American jazz trumpeter Terence Blanchard and New York singer Lisa Henry, who recently worked with Herbie Hancock, are just some of the guests at the festival, which performs in St. Petersburg on Friday.

"You would never imagine such big names in Moscow. Thanks to Triumph of Jazz, Moscow and Russia get a chance to see these guys for the first time," said Roman Khristyuk, director of the festival.

Blanchard is most famous for being a film composer with more than fifty scores including

"Malcolm X" and "Jungle Fever" to his name. He was a key figure in the 1980s jazz resurgence and has won five Grammy awards. He will be playing a mixture of his celebrated works and electronic jazz in his first performance in Russia.

"The audience here is often much younger than a Western audience, which I am very happy about," Butman told The Moscow Times. "We have kids playing alongside experienced musicians in the concert. ... It's a great way of getting more people excited about jazz. I am optimistic for the future of jazz music in Russia."

Sofia Rubina, a leading jazz vocalist from Estonia and a recent contestant on the Russian version of "The Voice," is another guest.

Butman said that promoting young Russian talent is an important part of the festival and pointed to jazz pianist Yevgeny Lebedev, whom he rates highly.

"Each act is in the jazz domain, but they all play different styles of jazz and want to try something new," said Butman, who said he knows all of the artists personally.

The festival also has a photo exhibition called "Jazz and Kids: Past, Present, Future," on at the Muzeon Arts Park until Feb. 28, featuring pictures of legendary Russian jazz musicians in their youth and children currently studying jazz in Moscow.

The Triumph of Jazz festival is on held Saturday and Sunday at both the Moscow International House of Music and the Igor Butman Jazz Club. See igorbutman.com *for a detailed lineup.*

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