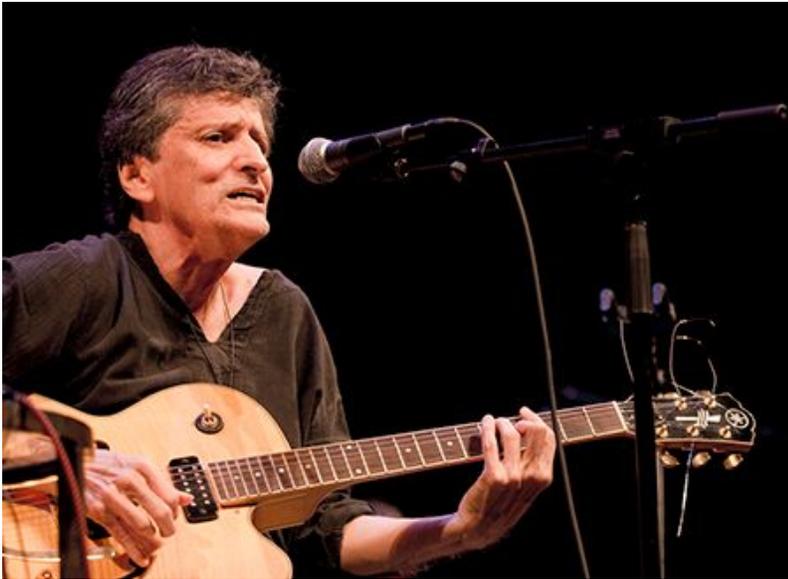


An afternoon at Tri-C Jazz Fest: Day 3

by Delaney Meyers & Mike Telin



The Saturday, June 30 performances at the Tri-C Jazz Fest began with a captivating set by Vinicius Cantuaria. During the 1:00 pm, seventy-minute concert at the intimate Hanna Theater, the Brazilian took the audience on a sonic journey of the enthralling world of bossa novas. There were no long introductions and no gimmicky jokes, he and his band came onstage and let their music do the talking.

Cantuaria's at times meditative, at times brooding, voice and his untroubled guitar playing made you forget that you were in Cleveland, Ohio and not at a club in Rio. Assisted by Paul Socolow on bass, Helio Alves on piano, Adriano Des Santos on drums and Bill Dobrow on percussion, the ensemble gave a master class in nuance. Unlike so many musicians, for this ensemble that word meant more than simply going from loud to soft. Once they achieved quiet, they showed you the hundreds of tone and color variations that live inside that dynamic. Technically, the quintet was second to none. Whether fast or slow, the players were inside each others' minds.

Hopefully Vinicius Cantuaria will be asked to return to the Festival, and given a more prominent time slot — people need to know him. This was the one set I wished had gone long. — MT



Up-and-coming saxophonist Grace Kelly opened for Terence Blanchard, sparkling as she entered the stage to the tune of *It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got that Swing)*. She improvised lyrics as she spoke and sang directly to the sold-out crowd, getting everyone involved with snaps and laughs. Though at times slightly contrived, her continuous dancing as she played was an athletic feat, and an entertaining one. She

gave personal songs an endearing, youthful edge, only sometimes venturing into triteness as in *Trying to Figure it Out*, written quickly and inspired by her mom.

The highlight of the set was a mind-blowing drum solo by Ross Pederson, with Kelly inserting saxophone comments here and there. Joining the band for the first time, Snarky Puppy member Justin Stanton was firey on keys and trumpet — in the middle of a song, he picked up his horn in an impressively quick transition to join Kelly in a back-and-forth melody. Their set ended with a classic, Michael Jackson's *Billy Jean*, in which Kelly led the audience in an extended call and response. Bassist Julia Adamy never missed a beat in keeping up with Kelly's enigmatic improvisations.



Terence Blanchard brought his "Jazz in Film" project to the stage, accompanied by the Spirit of the Groove Big Band, led by Cleveland native Dominick Farinacci. The Band continued the afternoon's showcase of young talent, featuring musicians from 10th grade through college from all around Northeast Ohio. Saxophonist Birsa Chatterjee and trombonist Caleb Smith, both from the Oberlin

Conservatory, particularly stood out. Chatterjee's artistry was highlighted when he and Blanchard traded extended solos. Saxophonists Avandre Sayles, from Bedford High School, and Thomas Schinabeck and Burt Hall, both from Shaker Heights, also played with creativity and confidence in solos that were mature beyond their age.

The band was tight under Farinacci's direction, allowing Blanchard to play freely over them, painting a picture with his trumpet in cinematic jazz ballads with his signature funky, virtuosic style. The trumpeter called Farinacci's Tri-C Jazz Fest Summer Camp a "first-tier mentorship program." The set was almost entirely slow paced, steady music which, though beautiful, lasted slightly too long — especially after Kelly's less-than-succinct set. — DM

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