

Lighting The Road To The Future

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History of the
New Orleans
Jazz Festival

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'TREME'

Do you know what it means?



Antoinne Batiste (played by Wendell Pierce) is a struggling trombonist in post-Katrina New Orleans. The new HBO series 'Treme' features several New Orleanian musicians and artists in this authentic production.

“It all began in New Orleans.
In New Orleans, it comes from here,
it all flows from here.”

- Blake Lehey, Music Supervisor, 'Treme'

From David Simon, creator of HBO's The Wire, the debut series 'Treme' set in New Orleans, chronicles the rebuilding of our unique American culture after devastation.

“Down in the Treme it's me and my baby, we're all goin' crazy, but jumpin' and havin' fun”.... The melody rings out as the much anticipated new series launched on small screens in living rooms across America. And with the first episode - 'Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans?' America soon got an idea of what it means. “There's pride on Bourbon Street”, several musicians suggest in the show which premiered on Sunday.

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616 Barrone Street, Suite 584, New Orleans, LA 70113
Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622

editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones
CEO/Publisher
 Glenn Jones
VP Advertising & Marketing
 Cheryl Mainor
Managing Editor
 Edwin Buggage
Editor
 Dionne Character
Arts & Entertainment Editor
 Melanie Mainor
Copy Editor Intern
 June Hazeur
Accounting

Contributors
 Edwin Buggage
 Cheryl Mainor
 New Orleans Jazz &
 Heritage Festival Foundation

Photos
 HBO
 NOJHF Inc.

Art Direction & Production
 MainorMedia.com
Editorial Submissions
 datanewseditor@bellsouth.net
Advertising Inquiries
 datanewsad@bellsouth.net

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'Treme' begins in the fall of 2005 three months after Katrina Set at that time most remember as dark, but filled with hope, 'Treme' celebrates the soul and spirit of New Orleanians, while it quietly indicts the systems which failed us before and after Katrina and the flood. The drama follows a group of interconnected struggling musicians and locals including Antoine Batiste (Wendell Pierce) a trombonist, Ladonna Batiste-Williams played by Khandi Alexander is a bar owner who is struggling with her husband and sons living in Baton Rouge and her husband's disapproving Creole family. Other stories intertwine with the Batiste storyline, Albert Lambreaux played by Clark Peters is a displaced Mardi Gras Indian Chief who returns to his devastated neighborhood determined to stay and rebuild his way of life, and Tulane Professor Creighton Burnette, played by John Goodman becomes an outspoken critic of the government's response to the devastation.

The underlying premise of the show is that if "There is Pride on Bourbon Street", then there is Pride everywhere in the real New Orleans; the moldy, mud-caked war zone that was our beloved Crescent City. And 'Treme' brings to the forefront the music and people which make this city great, and brought it back to life when all outside were betting on her forever demise. 'Treme' is about us.

While 'Treme' is a celebration of our glorious jazz history, it is also critical of our

dysfunctions and pulls no punches in addressing them but does so with subtlety, "There is a dark undercurrent to New Orleans, and it's what makes the art of the place so intense," Simon said to a group of TV critics, commenting on our lack of good public schools and contrasting that with our magnificent Carnival, he said, It may be possible that you can't have both. What makes New Orleans great in one sense also makes it problematic in another. But that's to be examined." And examine it 'Treme' does. The show weaves a wondrous tapestry of visual images set amidst an incredible montage of music staring at our own local artists. They pepper the screen, from Kermit Ruffins; to Allen Toussaint many of our "Greats" are featured in the show, giving the highest level of authenticity to the flavor of our city. "They should expect to learn a lot about New Orleans flavor, culture, foods and the way we live and how we could come back as a whole after a big disaster, Katrina," says Kermit Ruffins about the show.

Audiences can expect to see great performances by many of our best players including, Bruce Sunpie Barnes, Karen "Juicie" Ruffins, the late Bunchy Johnson, Henry "Simply" Griffin, Dr John and the Rebirth Brass Band.

'Treme' features a lineup of New Orleanians with lots of hope, trying to get along outside of the normalcy of life due to the intensity of circumstances they find themselves enduring in a post-Katrina



world. 'Treme' takes us beyond the tourist's view, beyond the canned performances and the noxious world of Big East-

ness outsiders have come to view as the reality of New Orleans, and into the soul of our uniquely fragile American city,

built on a bedrock of pride.

(Next week part 2, New Orleanians make 'Treme' an authentic work of art)

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The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

The Historic Journey to Today

By: N.O.J & H. F. Foundation

Mahalia Jackson, often called the greatest gospel singer, returned to her hometown to appear at the first New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in April of 1970. While attending the Louisiana Heritage Fair in Congo Square (then known as Beaugard Square), she and Duke Ellington, who also appeared at the event, came upon the Eureka Brass Band leading a crowd of second-line revelers through the Festival grounds. George Wein, producer of the Festival, handed Ms. Jackson a microphone, she sang along with the band and joined the parade...and the spirit of Jazz Fest was born.

This spontaneous, momentous scene—this meeting of jazz and heritage—has stood for decades since as a stirring symbol of the authenticity of the celebration that was destined to become a cultural force.

From the very beginning, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival was envisioned as an important event that would have great cultural significance and popular appeal. The Festival was the culmination of years of discussions and efforts by city leaders who wanted to create an event worthy of the city's legacy as the birthplace of jazz. A couple of other festivals were held in the years leading up to the first New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, but those events, different in format, did not take hold as the Jazz & Heritage Festival would.

In 1970, George Wein, jazz impresario behind the Newport Jazz Festival and the Newport Folk Festival (begun respectively in 1954 and 1959) was hired to design and produce a unique festival for New Orleans. The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, a non-profit organization, was established to oversee the Festival.

Wein's concept of the Louisiana Heritage Fair—a large daytime fair with multiple stages featuring a wide variety of indigenous music styles, food booths of Louisiana cuisine, and arts and crafts booths, along with an evening concert series—formed a construct that would prove vastly appealing and enduring.

In announcing the first Festival, scheduled for April 22 – 26, Wein said, "The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival represents a new and exciting idea in festival presentation. This festival could only be held in New Orleans because here and here alone is the richest musical heritage in America." He also noted, with great prescience, "New Orleans, in the long run, should become bigger than Newport in jazz festivals. Newport was manufactured, but New Orleans is the real thing."

In 1970, only about 350 people attended the Festival, about half the number of musicians and other participants in the event. But the Festival, which became known as "Jazz Fest" almost immediately, was a great artistic success. When Jazz Fest was held the next year, it was clear that the event had already outgrown Congo Square.



Congo Square 2010: "Say Uncle". A Portrait of Lionel Batiste by Terrance Osborne . Second in the Congo Square Parade Series. Visit art4now.com for more information or to pre-order this poster. Poster TM & © 2010 N.O.J. & H. F. Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For the 1972 Festival, the event moved to the infield of the Fair Grounds Race Course, the third-oldest racetrack in America (open since 1872). Jazz Fest would grow quickly over the next few years, constantly expanding its use of the 145-acre site. In 1975, the Festival, still just a five-day event with only three days of the Louisiana Heritage Fair, had an anticipated attendance of 80,000. This was also the first year of the Festival's popular, limited-edition silkscreen poster, now recognized as the most popular poster series in the world.

From 1976 to 1978, Jazz Fest expanded to two full weekends of the Heritage Fair, and in 1979, for the 10th anniversary, the Festival scheduled three weekends, though one entire weekend was cancelled due to rain.

The decade of the 1990s saw the appeal of Jazz Fest and the Festival's significance as a cultural symbol soar. The New York Times would note that the Jazz Festival had "become inseparable from the culture it presents." The Festival added features like the Thursday that kicks off the second weekend (1991); an International Pavilion that celebrates other cultures (Haiti, Mali, Panama, Brazil, Martinique, and in 2004, South Africa); and the Native American stage and area.

In 2001, the Festival celebrated Louis Armstrong's centennial, and the total attendance eclipsed 650,000, shattering records for virtually every day of the Heritage Fair, including the all-time single-day attendance record of 160,000. Wein's prediction that New Orleans would become the first city of jazz festivals had clearly come true.

With 12 stages of soul-stirring music—jazz, gospel, Cajun, zydeco, blues, R&B, rock, funk, African, Latin, Caribbean, folk, and much more—the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is a singular celebration. The event has showcased most of the great artists of New Orleans and Louisiana of the last half century: Professor Longhair, Fats Domino, The Neville Brothers, Wynton Marsalis, Dr. John, Branford Marsalis, Harry Connick Jr., Ellis Marsalis, The Radiators, Irma Thomas, The Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Allen Toussaint, Buckwheat Zydeco, The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Better Than Ezra, Ernie K-Doe, Vernel Bagneris, The Zion Harmonizers, Beausoleil and many others.

Over the years Jazz Fest has received many honors, including being named the Festival of the Year four times by Pollstar magazine. The 2004 event marks the 35th anniversary of Jazz Fest, which the Wall Street Journal says "showcases a wider, deeper lineup of essential American musical styles than any festival in the nation..." and which Life magazine has called "the country's very best music festival."

Inspired by the spirit of Mahalia Jackson and the Eureka Brass Band back in 1970, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival continues to celebrate the culture of Louisiana with the combined fervor of a gospel hymn and the joy of a jazz parade.

HBO "Treme" star, Wendell Pierce, joins the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra in celebrating the first free outdoor concert in Pontchartrain Park

The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra invites the community to bring their blankets, lawn chairs and picnic baskets and enjoy the glorious sounds of live music in the first free outdoor concert ever presented in New Orleans' Pontchartrain Park (Press Drive at Prentiss Avenue).

stead, Sheriff Marlin Gusman and LPO Trustee William D. Hess, whose grandparents, Edith and Edgar Stern encouraged the original development of the Pontchartrain Park area.

Additional support comes from Sen. Karen Carter

Peterson; MFR Accountants and Consultants; Dryades Street YMCA; Egana Circular Consulting; Rep. J.P. Morrell; and Rep. Jared Brossett.

In the event of rain, the concert will take place on Sunday, April 18 at 6 p.m.



Wendell Pierce

Beginning at 6 p.m. on Saturday, April 17, the Orchestra, led by LPO Resident Conductor Rebecca Miller, will serenade listeners with a selection of well-known and well-loved works from George Gershwin's *Girl Crazy Overture* to the beloved *America the Beautiful*, introduced by Wendell Pierce and community leaders.

The concert is made possible through the generous assistance of Fidelity Home-

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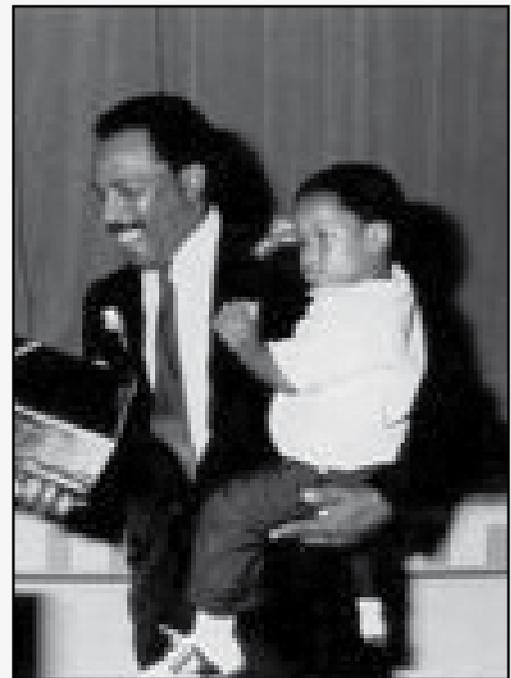
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trailblazer

Ron Gardner

An Inspiration for the Next Generation

by: Edwin Buggage



Ron Gardner is a man who has dedicated his life to serving his community, he says the seeds were planted very early in life, "I was nurtured by the men and women of Gretna, and it's hard to remember when I wasn't doing something."

In his over six decades of life he has seen the world change around him and continues to pass on life lessons to future generations as a mentor, civic and business leader sitting on several boards. He has lived through the time when the nation and city grappled with issues of race that defined

a generation during the tumultuous civil rights era when the nation's racial landscape began to change. Today he is still drinking from the well of life looking for the light that lies at the perimeter of darkness sharing his experiences with others.

Gardner looks back on this time although tough, with fond memories of a community that rooted him in selfless giving. "I grew up in a loving environment," says Gardner. He talks of not having his biological father in his life but others came along in this "village" to raise what has become a man

who has lived a charmed fulfilled life. "I saw my biological father maybe 10 times when I was young until the time I joined the military. But a man came along "Papa" who married my mother and became my dad and raised us." Continuing he says, "It takes a man to raise a family of children and it takes a whole different level of man to raise somebody else's children."

He goes on to say how communities are very different today, "We had an extended family where people looked out for each other in our times even the criminal elements in our

community had some sense of etiquette." He reflects on those times by quoting his mother, "If you can't help don't hinder," "and that is something that is not present today that there are those who stand in the way of progress that the spirit of togetherness is not as it had been."

As he talks to young people he says, "We must select from life." These words are he repeats as if they have mantra like qualities attached. He recounts a moment from his life to illustrate his point, "I think it is tougher today to be young, but every gen-

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Trailblazer, Continued previous page.

eration has its challenges and we must select from life." Again talking of his childhood he says, "We walked a mile to school past three white schools." "I think about those times not with bitterness, but I remember the white school bus driver's would sometimes stop the bus so the white children could throw things at us, spit and call us dirty names." Then his voice shifts to a tone like that of a preacher about to go into a rousing inspirational sermon as he says, "But I also remember there was a White man, Mr. Sidney who owned a store not far from my house." "I was standing looking at a pack of white writing paper and at the time as Blacks we had what was called rough paper that was brown." "I must have been staring at this paper, he then walked up to me and said aren't you going to school and he took the paper and put it in my school bag and said go on to school."

Mr. Gardner is a man who is a positive force in times that seem bleak. He is someone who sees

the silver lining behind the clouds, and always seems to find a maxim to match the moment. Continuing chiming on about his experiences he says of his story in the store he says, "I mention this to point out that you could be held captive by the negative circumstances that I had to face then and even now, or realize that there is good and bad in everyone." "And I have chosen to take what is good from life to move it forward and that's what I do to pass it on to youth," says Gardner.

He is a military veteran who served in Vietnam, he says he took away from it something that has helped him in his life that he passes on to young people, "Life is very precious and we only have moments on this planet so we should cherish them because in the blink of an eye you can be alive or dead so I advise please take advantage of the opportunities you have in the moment." Gardner has spent his life volunteering and it gives him joy and enriches his life. He continues

to challenge young people to do the same, "I encourage kids to volunteer; it is about getting a gift yourself from the gift of giving and having a growth experience, that those who came to volunteer to help our city left enriched because they gave unselfishly of themselves," says Gardner.

A veteran of politics working in an advisory capacity to several U.S. Presidents and working in the office of New Orleans Mayor, Moon Landrieu and the first African-American Mayor, Ernest 'Dutch' Morial, he recounts the words of Morial, something he has taken to his work with young people. Dutch use to always say, "don't tell me what you're going to do tell me what you have already done." "I say this to say that we should always be striving to do something to better our community and our lives, and this is a journey where we should constantly be making steps in that direction by doing."

He sees a city with a bright future for the next generation, he

foresees New Orleans moving forward into a progressive 21st century global place abundant in opportunities, "This city will experience a renaissance that is unbelievable." Further he says of the resilience of New Orleans and its people, "After Katrina we are still here rebuilding, we're the little engine that could and it is proof positive of what we're made of in this town." Speaking of employment opportunities he says, "In the future after a kid walks across the stage to get their diploma or degree they will have more choices." "If they choose to go somewhere else it is not because they have to, but because they want to because there will be so much going on in this town."

Spirituality has guided his commitment and has given his life meaning, value and purpose. And although he has distinguished himself in the healthcare field, civic and business community, his words are as inspirational and uplifting as any preacher or motivational speaker. These are just a

few of a laundry list of things he shared with Data News Weekly as recipes for happiness and fulfillment. On job and career, "Try to pick something you are going to truly love, work even when you love it, it's hard." On serving community, "Get out there and do something for somebody, do a good act just because it is a good act not because you seek any recognition." "The payback is not in dollars and cents but what you do for your community." "Advancing society forward requires something extra."

Ron Gardner, a man on a mission who has given the gift that keeps on giving; is serving his community at its darkest hour. A person who is giving a glimmer of hope, letting his light shine with the example of how to live a good life; a man on a mission to serve his community as an inspiration for future generations.



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- Decide New Orleans' share of over \$400 billion in federal funding allocations
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- Give an accurate count of the population of New Orleans

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