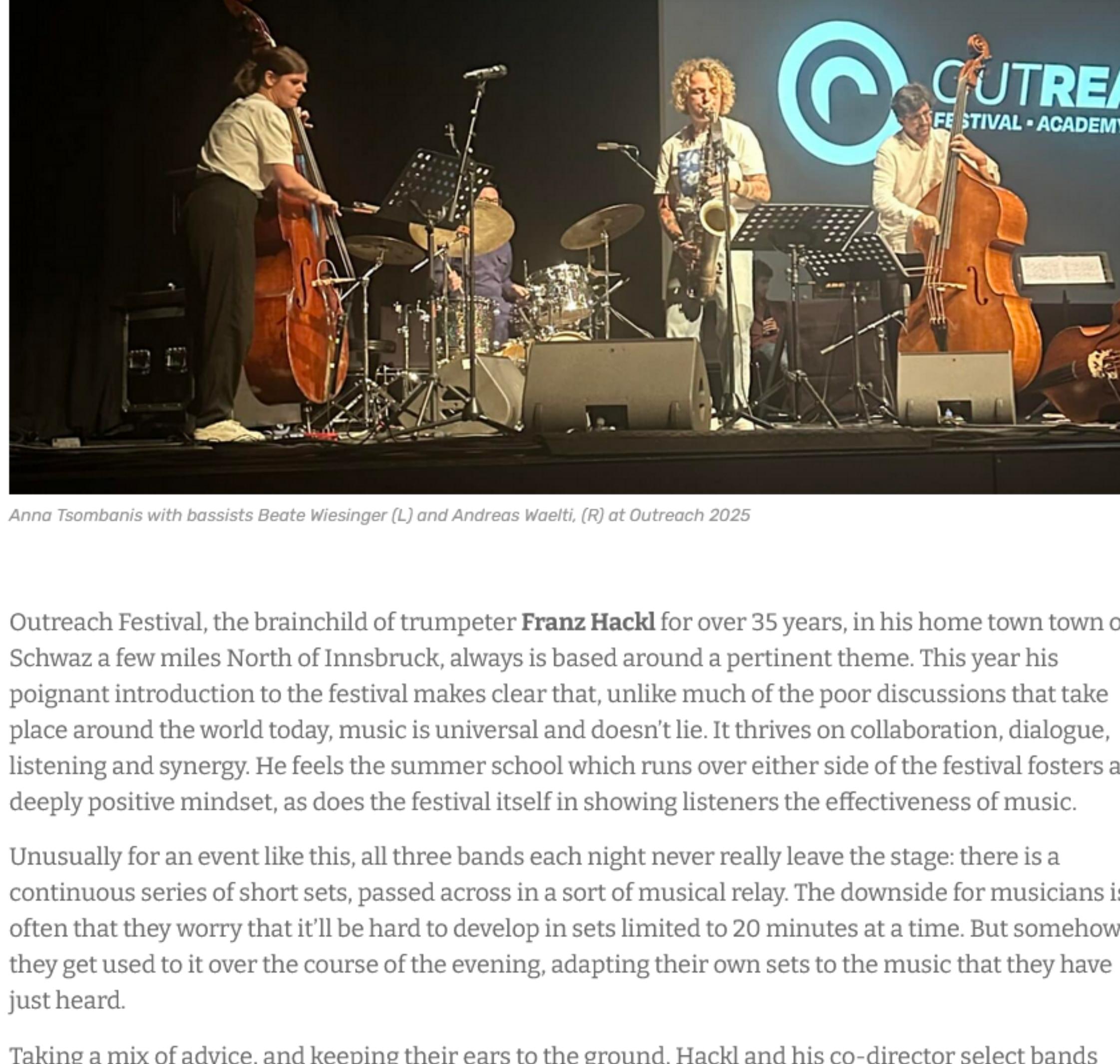


LIVE, REVIEWS

Outreach Festival 2025, Austria

Schwaz, Tyrol, 7-8 August

by Oliver Weindling 20 September 2025

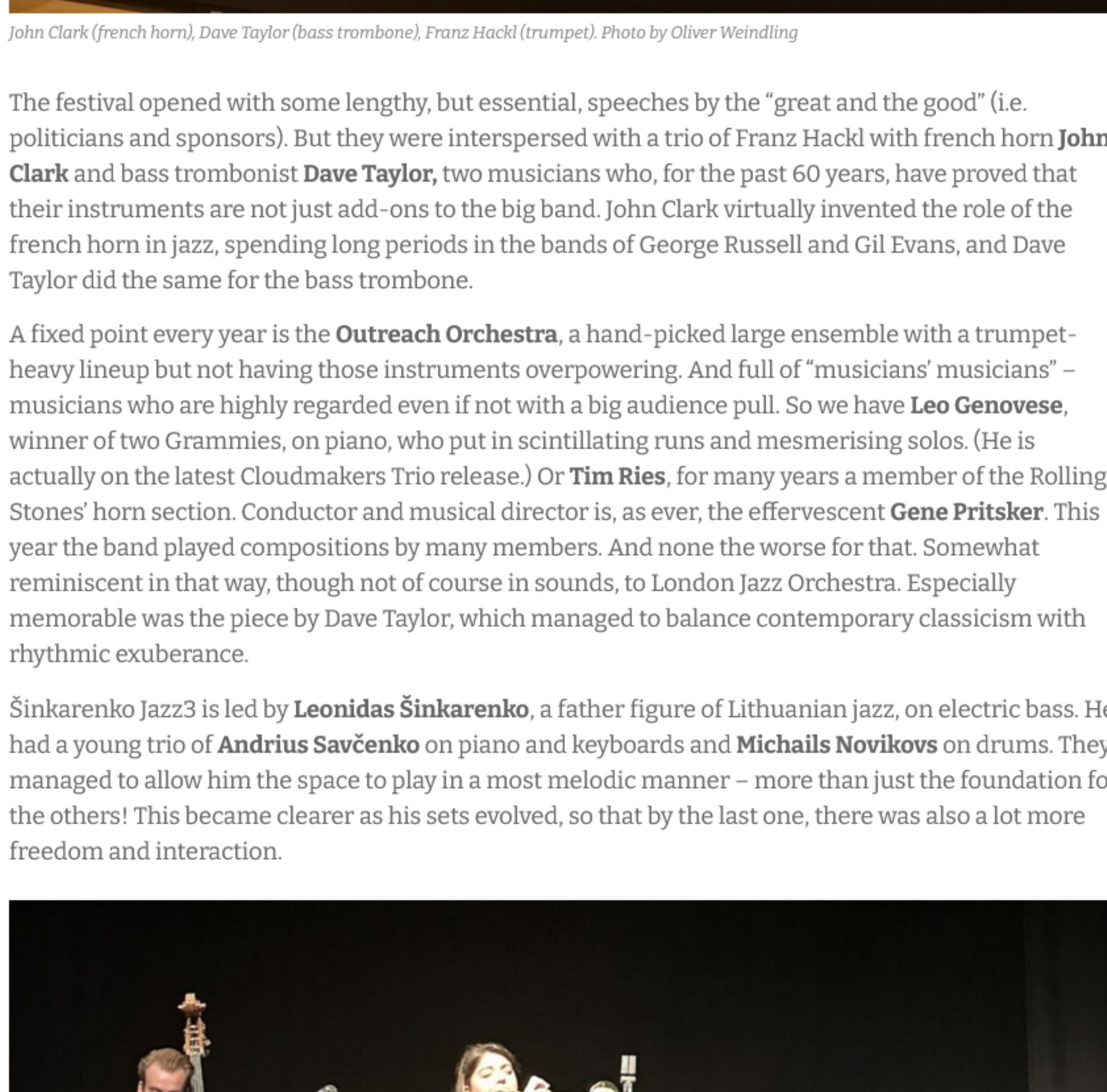


Anna Tsombanis with bassists Beate Wiesinger (L) and Andreas Waelti, (R) at Outreach 2025

Outreach Festival, the brainchild of trumpeter **Franz Hackl** for over 35 years, in his home town town of Schwaz a few miles North of Innsbruck, always is based around a pertinent theme. This year his poignant introduction to the festival makes clear that, unlike much of the poor discussions that take place around the world today, music is universal and doesn't lie. It thrives on collaboration, dialogue, listening and synergy. He feels the summer school which runs over either side of the festival fosters a deeply positive mindset, as does the festival itself in showing listeners the effectiveness of music.

Unusually for an event like this, all three bands each night never really leave the stage: there is a continuous series of short sets, passed across in a sort of musical relay. The downside for musicians is often that they worry that it'll be hard to develop in sets limited to 20 minutes at a time. But somehow they get used to it over the course of the evening, adapting their own sets to the music that they have just heard.

Taking a mix of advice, and keeping their ears to the ground, Hackl and his co-director select bands not necessarily well known. Or we get musicians taking the front line, in contexts we don't usually know them for, such as bassist **Matt Garrison**.

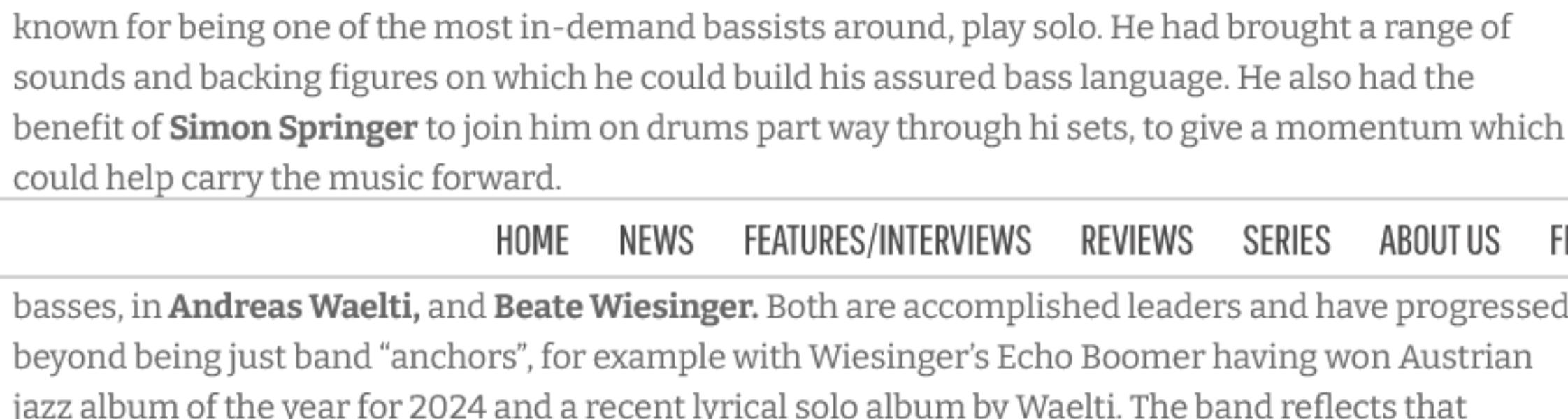


John Clark (french horn), Dave Taylor (bass trombone), Franz Hackl (trumpet). Photo by Oliver Weindling

The festival opened with some lengthy, but essential, speeches by the "great and the good" (i.e. politicians and sponsors). But they were interspersed with a trio of Franz Hackl with french horn **John Clark** and bass trombonist **Dave Taylor**, two musicians who, for the past 60 years, have proved that their instruments are not just add-ons to the big band. John Clark virtually invented the role of the french horn in jazz, spending long periods in the bands of George Russell and Gil Evans, and Dave Taylor did the same for the bass trombone.

A fixed point every year is the **Outreach Orchestra**, a hand-picked large ensemble with a trumpet-heavy lineup but not having those instruments overpowering. And full of "musicians' musicians" – musicians who are highly regarded even if not with a big audience pull. So we have **Leo Genovese**, winner of two Grammies, on piano, who put in scintillating runs and mesmerising solos. (He is actually on the latest Cloudmakers Trio release.) Or **Tim Ries**, for many years a member of the Rolling Stones' horn section. Conductor and musical director is, as ever, the effervescent **Gene Pritsker**. This year the band played compositions by many members. And none the worse for that. Somewhat reminiscent in that way, though not of course in sounds, to London Jazz Orchestra. Especially memorable was the piece by Dave Taylor, which managed to balance contemporary classicism with rhythmic exuberance.

Šinkarenko Jazz3 is led by **Leonidas Šinkarenko**, a father figure of Lithuanian jazz, on electric bass. He had a young trio of **Andrius Savčenko** on piano and keyboards and **Michails Novikovs** on drums. They managed to allow him the space to play in a most melodic manner – more than just the foundation for the others! This became clearer as his sets evolved, so that by the last one, there was also a lot more freedom and interaction.



Alex Ridout Quartet. Photo by Oliver Weindling

There's usually one band at Outreach with a UK connection. Trumpeter **Alexandra Ridout** is really making waves in New York, and Franz Hackl, having got to know her through his constant curiosity for London, is now booking her regularly to play in big bands over there. She really was, to the audience, the biggest positive surprise. It was great to be able to hear her on a more substantial stage, being so used to hearing her at the Vortex or in bars in London such as Syp. And she really carried it off, showing her mastery of the instrument. Her long assured lines were such that the bass and drums seemed to hang off her and thus have a great freedom. A band that had its foundation from above rather than from the bass (**Freddie Jensen**) or drums (**Quinton Cain**).

The bass connection had continued on Friday with two other lineups. Matt Garrison was the bassist for the Outreach Orchestra the previous night and it was intriguing and pleasurable to hear him, as he is known for being one of the most in-demand bassists around, play solo. He had brought a range of sounds and backing figures in which he could build his bass language. He also had the benefit of **Simon Springer** to join him on drums part way through his sets, to give a momentum which helped the music forward.

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