

Christian Hernandez

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Prof Jon De Lucia

Intro to Jazz

Interviewing NYC Jazz Musicians

Gabe Terracciano has several titles from, violinist, bassist, composer, to educator. Gabe Terracciano has had an impressive career, having had performances all around the United States of America. He has also been a part of the Ghanaian National Symphony Orchestra and played through Costa Rica with the East Eleventh Collective. Gabe Terracciano performs with the two-time Grammy Award-winning Turtle Island String Quartet as the first violinist along with other New York city-based groups. Gabe Terracciano is an improvising string player and has dived into a variety of types of music from modern jazz, Gypsy and hot jazz, middle eastern, electronic pop, bluegrass, and Latin styles.

Gabe Terracciano has also taught at NYU as an adjunct instructor in violin and guitar. He has also worked in other educational organizations such as Tufts Community Music, Maine Jazz Camp, and The geniusHive School.

Gabe Terracciano's experience and being versed in a variety of styles of jazz was the perfect person to hear about when it comes to the current state of jazz after the devastating effects the pandemic has had on the world. Being a local to New York City and being a part of the ongoing jazz culture in the city will give us a deep insight into the before and after of the pandemic on jazz musicians and the genre. We dive straight away into the effects of the pandemic and how it was dealt with especially in this age of social media and technology.

Christian: The impacts of the pandemic were felt around the world and there was a massive surge of activity online. People took their hobbies and passions to the internet from social media sites such as Instagram, Tik Tok to video streaming platforms such as Twitch and YouTube.

Christian: How did you Mr. Terracciano manage to keep jazz alive in your life during the 2020 lockdowns?

Gabe Terracciano: I play in a number of different bands, and I'm lucky enough to have a community of musical collaborators around me who I was able to work on projects with over the pandemic. I mostly got involved with different Livestream projects, did a lot of recordings in my home studio, and some video shoots that were shot remotely but then edited together. After the initial panic of not being able to be around others at all, I would play outside or busk in the park with friends and colleagues. I was playing gigs in person from May 2020 onward actually, although those wouldn't be considered jazz as much as wedding and religious music for Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish folks. For some reason, those gigs never really stopped, but it kept me actively playing and giving me performances to practice towards, which kept up my general

motivation to work on other projects as well. I definitely became much more savvy when it came to home recording in order to keep up with remote projects that I was involved in, which has since proved to be a generally useful skill.

Christian: What positive or negative impacts do you see or have seen because of jazz musicians relying on having an online presence during the first few months of the pandemic on streaming platforms like Twitch or YouTube?

Gabe Terracciano: One of my friends and colleagues from when I went to grad school is now a full time Twitch streamer, where he plays both jazz covers and original compositions on piano for a live audience of observers. He had originally started streaming before the pandemic, but I think that it really became his full time occupation during lockdown. Streaming on Twitch and/or YouTube can expose your music and art to way more people, create a farreaching community of fellow musicians and fans, and offer a revenue stream that was crucial for some musicians during the pandemic. However, it can also demand a lot of time and energy when it comes to creating content, enough so that other opportunities might have to be passed up. Another of my friends who is considered a "YouTube Star" has made a career out of creating videos and other content for his channel, but is almost never able to play live gigs as a result. The positive and negative impacts of having more of an online presence will vary from musician to musician, mostly based on what they want to get out of a musical career. For instance, every time that I'm in one of my friend's videos, I get YouTube subscribers and Instagram followers based solely on my appearance, which boosts my online presence and even helps with album sales and people coming to gigs! But I also know that I love performing live with different bands and projects, and that if I took on more of an online presence, I would probably not be able to do as much of that since I'd be spending much more of my time creating digital content. When it comes to having an online presence, it's not inherently positive or negative, but it's really important to find a balance that works with what you want to achieve in a musical career.

Christian: The metaverse is a virtual reality space that allows people to go into the world without having to do so in real life. Do you think jazz will be able to transition into that space? What challenges do you see jazz musicians will face in that transition?

Gabe Terracciano: Jazz is a very adaptable artform and has certainly gone through a number of changes and reinventions over time. I have no doubt that it will do so once again in this current time, although I can't say for sure what that would look like in relation to the metaverse. In a way I guess it's already happening with the rise of streaming and VR platforms that can allow viewers into a concert space without having to physically be there. The biggest challenges will probably be that we all have to be much more tech savvy as musicians and find ways to make our performances and projects more engaging for an online audience. How does one preserve the intensity and atmosphere of a live performance for a virtual audience? For a genre that finds so much of its identity in spontaneous composition and improvisation, what can we do as artists to speak to people through a screen, rather than face to face? And at such a personal level? I suppose it's one thing to create a piece of art to be broadcast to many people simultaneously (like with TV), but with the rise of VR spaces and platforms, that viewing experience switches from communal to very personal. In what ways can we make our music speak personally to each person watching, and how can we engage with our audience on an individual level? I guess we'll find out!

Christian: The younger audiences such as Gen Z are the generation that might not go see a jazz show and instead stream it. What would you say is something a younger audience would miss out on by watching a live stream of a jazz show instead of watching it in person?

Gabe Terracciano: They'll miss out on being in the same room as something that is being created in real time by masters of their craft. It's the same thing with watching a concert video versus being at a concert in person. One of my favorite concert movies is "Stop Making Sense", which is a documentary of a Talking Heads concert. I recently had the opportunity to watch David Byrne (the lead singer of Talking Heads) live in his musical "American Utopia", where they perform some of the same songs from Stop Making Sense. It was a really powerful experience for me, I actually found myself tearing up. There's an emotional response to watching other humans perform that can't be equaled simply by viewing them through a screen. We live in a world of short soundbites and clips where the popularity of something is based on the amount of clicks and engagement it gets. We scroll and scroll and scroll, and for what? To find something that makes us feel, or that interests us, or that triggers an emotional response. Watching a live performance of any kind in person can give you all that and more.

Christian: Now that restrictions are being lifted and the country has working vaccines, do you see jazz returning to New York city stronger than before the pandemic?

Gabe Terracciano: So the last time there was a global pandemic, it was followed by the Roaring Twenties. Already into the first months of 2022, I'm finding that New York is opening up again, and that live music in general is picking back up where it left off. Whether it's in New York City or in other venues around the country and around the world, people really want to get back out and see live music and entertainment, at least that's the impression that I've been getting. Obviously we live in very different times than we were following the 1918 pandemic, and I'm sure that the timeline won't be an exact mirror, but I'm hopeful that the coming years will be good to both jazz and the musicians that play it.