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BERKLEE BEANTOWN JAZZ FESTIVAL 2016: EXPANSIVE CHORDS AND COMMUNITY

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Kevin Harris, pianist with local Boston roots and a graduate of The New England Conservatory, brought his *Kevin Harris Project* (www.KeinHarrisProject.com) to the “Berklee Stage” and delivered his own glowing ruminations on keyboard. Harris and his simpatico bandmates, (Steve Langone on drums, Fernando Huergo on electric bass, Jason Palmer on trumpet, and Rick DiMuzio on sax) performed a series of Harris’ original compositions inspired by a Victorian poem, “*Invictus*,” by W.E. Henley (1849-1903).

The first of these involved Jason Palmer, (one of my favorite young trumpet players), taking up the slow brewing melodic phrase with an intense solo: his clear and crisp tones bursting forth into the sunshine with a roistering purpose up and down his fluid registers. DiMuzio followed with his own solo on his sax, softly evolving into hearty runs and a brawny, bighearted tone.

On “*Lullaby For A Yellow Bird, Lullaby For Humanity*” Harris brought his supremely assured piano style to this tranquil original: his touch was understated and subtle; he preferred a light swinging facility to heavier (percussive and tension) styles, with a beautiful, fragile liquidity to his playing.

Harris has a great partner in drummer Langone, with whom he co-wrote the swashbuckling original, “*The Americas*” that the band performed with grooving action. The piece traversed the country from Preservation Hall to Broadway, all in the glint of Harris’ incandescent stride piano rifts and Langone’s big snare and cymbal surges.