



Office of General Services

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Contact:

Heather Groll | heather.groll@ogs.ny.gov | (518) 474-5987

OGS ANNOUNCES FREE MULTIMEDIA EVENT 'THE BANDLEADER WHO CHANGED AMERICA' ON OCTOBER 4

Free Performance at The Egg Complements Harlem Hellfighters Exhibition

New York State Office of General Services Commissioner RoAnn M. Destito today announced a special event, titled ***The Bandleader Who Changed America: A Musical Journey Through the Life of James Reese Europe*** presented by JDog Junk Removal & Hauling. This free presentation in The Egg's Swyer Theatre on October 4 at 6:30 p.m. is presented in conjunction with the exhibition, *Their Glory Can Never Fade: The Legacy of The Harlem Hellfighters*, on view in the Vietnam Gallery of the Robert Abrams Building for Law and Justice through February 2019.

"OGS is excited to bring together scholars and musicians from across the state to present a unique program that complements our Harlem Hellfighters exhibition and highlights New York's history and culture," said Commissioner Destito. "This event will appeal to all audiences and will combine history, music, and entertainment for a special evening experience in The Egg."

"We're proud to celebrate diversity and equality in the U.S. Armed Forces, which is exactly what this program and exhibition represent," said R.J. Gagnon, vice president of marketing and sales at JDog Junk Removal & Hauling Capital Region. "Through this event, we hope to educate the community about the history of New York legends and honor the memory and legacy of this diverse group of veterans."

Through the use of photos, film, and live music, this multimedia presentation will focus on the life and music of James Reese Europe (1880-1919), an extraordinary individual who was not only instrumental in the success of the Harlem Hellfighters, an African-American military regiment from New York that was dispatched to fight for France in World War I, but had a major influence in the development of jazz, swing, and contemporary dance music.

Featuring special guests Michael Dinwiddie, associate professor at New York University's Gallatin School and William Meckley, founder and music director of the Empire Jazz Orchestra, this special evening will also include a musical demonstration and performance by jazz pianist and composer David Gleason, highlighting the history of early jazz music and Europe's profound impact as a bandleader.

Classically trained, Europe honed his skills as a conductor for numerous touring shows produced by African Americans and featuring all-black casts at the beginning of the 20th

century. In 1912, he curated and conducted the first concert at Carnegie Hall to feature works by African-American composers and performed by the 125-member National Negro Symphony Orchestra.

As a bandleader, Europe's *Hell Fighters Band* created an international craze for syncopated ragtime music that would eventually change popular music. As an individual, he crossed the color bar, defied racial stereotypes, and emerged as a one of the early figures in the push for social equality and inclusion. Eubie Blake, American composer and lyricist, referred to James Reese Europe as the "Martin Luther King of Music."

The exhibition, *Their Glory Can Never Fade: The Legacy of The Harlem Hellfighters* can be viewed in the Vietnam Gallery of the Robert Abrams Building for Law and Justice weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. On October 4, the gallery will remain open until 6 p.m. to give guests an opportunity to see the exhibition before the special event.

Doors to The Egg will open at 6 p.m., and refreshments will be available for sale in the Hart Theatre Lobby. For additional information about this special event and the exhibition, visit our website at www.empirestateplaza.org and follow @NYSCapitolVisit on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

About the Presenters

William Meckley, Ph.D. is the conductor and trombonist who (until his recent retirement) served as Dean of the School of Music at Schenectady County Community College (SCCC). Meckley is founder and music director of the Empire Jazz Orchestra, a professional jazz repertory ensemble that performed and recorded significant music from throughout the history of jazz, ranging from Jelly Roll Morton to Gil Evans and beyond. In 2016 Meckley received the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Professional Service.

Michael D. Dinwiddie, BA, MFA, is an associate professor of dramatic writing at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University. His teaching interests encompass cultural studies, ragtime music, dramatic writing, African American history and filmmaking. At the Gallatin School, Michael teaches a course entitled "James Reese Europe and American Music." Professor Dinwiddie currently serves as chairman of the Duke Ellington Center for the Arts and in 2018 was named as one of 10 fellows inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre, one of America's educational and theater community's highest honors.

David Gleason is a music educator, pianist and composer living in New York's Capital Region. As a jazz and Latin pianist, he has performed with ensembles such as RumbaNaMa, The Boston Latin Band, The Either/Orchestra, Bopitude, The Big Soul Ensemble, and The Empire Jazz Orchestra. Gleason studied music education and jazz studies at the Crane School of Music in Potsdam, New York. He has taught at the John Sayles School of Fine Arts, SCCC, and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. David Gleason is also the author of Alfred Publishing's "The Total Blues Keyboardist."

The *Bandleader who Changed America: A Musical Journey Through the Life of James Reese Europe* is presented with the support of sponsor **JDog Junk Removal & Hauling**, which proudly supports programs highlighting our veterans and individuals who served this country.

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