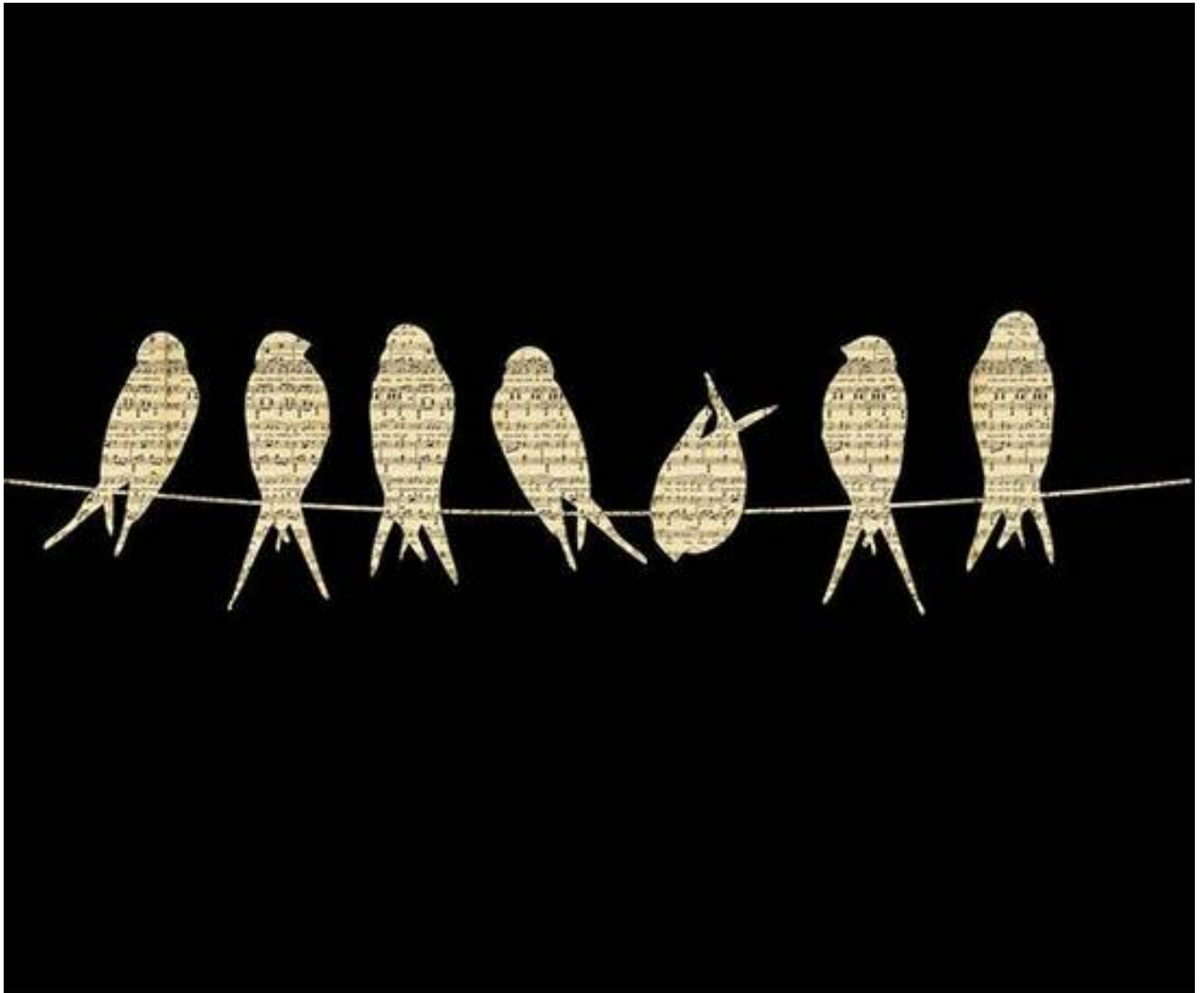




A Tribute To Those Who Want It

Enzo Capua (April 26, 2016)



On our tour of jazz at i-Italy, we have been revisiting important instruments—and, as a result, phenomenal musicians—that form the story of the music, both in America and in Italy. And we intend to continue along that path, because it's important to pique the interest of people who don't know the music well.



Yet I'd like to pause for a brief interlude to pay homage to all the lesser musicians, the minor enthusiasts who will never reach the heights of the major talents. I'm not talking about dilettantes or those who get their kicks playing for friends on the weekends. No, instead this is an ode to mediocrity.

I will try to explain what may seem like an awkward tribute. Journalists, critics, and music industry professionals often receive an absurd number of CDs, links to download albums, and other materials that pile up—often in the corners of our homes. “What are you whining about?” someone might say, a little irritated, “at least you don't have to buy that stuff!” And s/he would be right, in part, since a small slice of this music is really worth the trouble of being looked after.

But then there's the rest, the vast majority, which consists of (sometimes) unlistenable noise, unoriginal music, poor performances, superficial and pointless songs. Occasionally it angers us and we start thinking about how much time we've wasted and the inexorable accumulation of stuff, when what we should take into consideration—something important, something I dare call fundamental—is the very thing that makes those unbeautiful albums precious: they were almost always made with the passion and daily devotion of unskilled musicians hoping to be heard, praised, loved. For them, music is a means of conveying great emotion, even if it seems small to others.

That is why these musicians, who will never become famous, deserve to be supported, listened to, and advised with the kind of affection reserved for those who know that every day there are other people who, because they don't listen to music or only put it on in the background, are quite willing to say such minor artists are wasting their time. That they're losers, good for nothings. They're not; playing music with heart and passion is never a waste of time. Never, even for the talentless. Because that is how you give society—so desperate for success stories—a blast of awareness, levity, sounds that caress our faces hardened from chasing after power.

For years—decades—Italian jazz has always been considered a younger sibling, composed of musicians of the kind I just described. And yet all of these musicians not only fed the idea that jazz is a genre of music that has nobility, a heart Italians can appreciate; they also laid the foundation for what was to come, encouraging and helping develop hidden talents. They are partly responsible for Italian jazz's current importance, its roster of major performers, some of who are true geniuses.

This is not the space to name either the mediocre stars of music past or the major talents of music present. Yet it's important to say, once and for all, that without those past performers we wouldn't have today's leading lights. This is a tribute to those who want it, who want to continue to play and make music, who provide us with the gift of their passion and are unafraid of being misunderstood. We really need them.

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