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Jazz Stars Perform on St. Croix to Raise Funds for Music Programs at Local Schools

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From left to right: Lauren Henderson, Falsa, Joanie Leeds, and Charu Suri By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The first Jazz at the Castle event, hosted at the Castle of St. Croix saw a large turnout during the 3-day weekend of shows held from Jan. 13-15.

The shows kicked off with a meet and greet that included all of the weekend's performers on Friday night. On Saturday, there was a free concert in Frederiksted at the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts, followed by a gala at the Castle later that evening. The last event was Jazz at the Castle brunch, held on Sunday. Performers included Lauren Henderson, Pasquale Grasso, Charu Suri, Joanie Leeds, Falsa, and Steve Katz.

Charu Suri, an award-winning pianist and composer, introduced a different type of jazz to the event. "I do a special type of jazz called Ragga, which combines Indian music with jazz," said Suri, who became the first Indian-born jazz artist to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Grammy Award-winning jazz artist Joanie Leeds recounted her experience on St. Croix. "I've had the best time. I've never been here before so this is the first time on St. Croix and it has been magical. From the moment I got off the plane until today. I am sad that I have to return tomorrow. I play the guitar and I write my own music. My focus is on families, however I write music for all ages," she said.

Lauren Henderson, a jazz vocalist and composer knew she made the right choice when she agreed to perform at Jazz at the Castle. "This has been my first time on St. Croix and my experience so far has been magical and it's so beautiful here. As a woman with family from the islands, it felt like coming home. I am so happy to be here and to share music. Reaching out to the youth community is very important to me, so I'm really excited that we were able to do that. Lifting the youths up and the arts is vital," she said.

Falsa, a sufi singer, works very closely with Charu Suri and is a member of her band. His contributions help introduce the Indian styles of music to jazz. "I am based out of Manhattan. This is my first time on St. Croix and my experience so far has been beyond incredible," he said.

The event focused on raising funds to support music program at local schools. The Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts and the owner of the castle, John Alexander partnered to organize Jazz at the Castle, which is expected to be hosted annually.