



## 'Django In June' to celebrate Gypsy jazz with pair of Academy of Music concerts

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Christine Tassan Et Les Imposteurs will perform Saturday at the Academy of Music in Northampton. (Photo by Sylviane Robini)

**By Chris Dondoros | Special to The Republican**

NORTHAMPTON – Andrew Lawrence remembers when Django in June was nothing more than a one-day workshop held under a tree.

But by the time this year's edition of the Gypsy jazz festival and workshop reaches its conclusion with a pair of concerts at Northampton's [Academy of Music](#) on Friday and Saturday night, Lawrence will have witnessed hundreds of people – many of which

traveled thousands of miles – spend nearly a week at Smith College to play with, and learn from, some of the world’s top musicians.

With a diverse range of concerts featuring the likes of Swing of France with David Givone and Romane-Daniel John Martin Quartet on Friday night and Christine Tassan and Noe Reinhardt (a distant relative of the event's namesake, Django Reinhardt), Lawrence discussed Django in June's history and the genre's resurgence in popularity.

“Django in June started as a one-day event under a tree before becoming a weekend-long event at Smith College. Somebody who teaches at Smith told me they rent out the dorms for summer events,” said Lawrence, adding that many former students – such as guitarist Adrian Holovaty – have returned as instructors.

While Lawrence, who also runs Community Guitar, said he’s no Gypsy jazz guitarist himself, his inspiration for starting a Gypsy jazz-themed music camp was simple: it hadn’t been done before.

“Music camps exist dedicated to every style. Nobody had it for Gypsy jazz. From the beginning, it felt like the idea had wind in its sails. The interest was there; it was that folks needed to step up and put something on the map that met that demand,” said Lawrence.

By 2007, Lawrence said the camp's most recent iteration came to exist. Featuring a full-scale takeover of the Smith College campus, Django in June features “campers” of all ages and backgrounds staying on-campus for nearly a week, taking lessons from the genre's torch-bearers and staying awake deep into the night playing music with one another.

“We had around 70-90 people come in 2007. It stayed that way for a few years. The way it has gone, we went from 70-90 to 120. We went from 120 to 200. Last year we had 275 people attend,” he said. “You wander around all day and at night and see people jamming. It's wonderful.”

Lawrence said that while he played Gypsy jazz for a while, he quickly realized that his role within the genre had to be different.

“I’ve always been on the lookout for repertoire good for jamming. Before starting Django in June, I had thought about Gypsy jazz because it’s good for playing with others,” he said.

Lawrence said, however, a trip to the home of Gypsy jazz – Samois, France – changed his perception of the genre entirely.

“I realized there were so many things about the style that are unique. The chord voicings

are different. The picking technique is different. The guitars look different,” he said. “And before Django in June, there was not a lot that distinguished how unique of a style that Gypsy jazz is.”

Lawrence said that the camp itself – along with its concerts – are representative of his original goal: to simply give people an opportunity to be exposed to European jazz music.

“I want to give exposure to the European style of music,” he said.

Django in June’s Friday concert will feature accordion-driven Swing of France and the Romane-Daniel John Martin Quartet. Saturday’s concert will feature Christine Tassan Et Les Imposteurs and Noe Reinhardt, Costel Nitescu and Samy Dausat. Tickets start at \$15. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit <http://djangoinjune.com/concerts/>.

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