



U.S. singers Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett pose on the balcony of Brussels townhall (AP photo / Reuters)

Bennett, Gaga: Kids should know more about jazz

By: Mesfin Fekadu, Associated Press

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Kids, singers Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga have homework for you. They want you to listen to their new jazz album.

The Grammy Award winners say they hope "Cheek to Cheek," an album featuring selections from the Great American Songbook, will turn younger people on to jazz music. The Great American Songbook includes some of the best American music of the 20th century.

"The point of this album is not only to bring Tony and I together to collaborate. But to bring jazz to an entirely new audience," Gaga said. "This is really about us giving jazz what it deserves, which is the upmost respect and upmost praise."

"Cheek to Cheek" features covers of songs from Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" to Cole Porter's "Anything Goes" to Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life." Gaga and Bennett have worked on the album, to be released Tuesday, for two years.

"Besides having the whole world enjoying her right now, she has a vast group of young people who love her. And they've never heard popular jazz music, classical American music," Bennett said. "And my ambition was to do this album so they would get acquainted with that music."

Gaga, like Bennett, grew up in New York. She has been singing jazz music since she was 13. She broke onto the music scene in 2008 with multiple No. 1 hits flavored with dance and electronic beats.

"It's truer to my nature," she said of recording jazz. "Because so much of what I've done has been heavily Auto-Tuned or made very electronic to fit on the radio. But this is so much easier because I'm a rebel and this is really rebellious for me to say goodbye to pop for a moment and just sing some pure jazz." Auto Tune is an electronic process that can artificially improve sound.

"The truth is that this is the original pop music of America," she added. "And I've been trying to explain to my fans in the best way that I can that these songs are truly timeless."

Gaga, 28, and Bennett, 88, first collaborated in 2011 on "The Lady Is a Tramp." The song appeared on Bennett's album "Duets II." It sold more than 1 million copies and won two Grammy Awards.

Bennett, who had his first number one song in 1951, said the key to his longevity is maintaining high standards.

"I joined the American Theatre Wing (after fighting in World War II). And it was the best choice I ever made," he said, because he learned not to compromise on quality.

"And now," he said, "it's all paid off."

Critical thinking challenge: *Why does this collaboration have a better chance of introducing jazz to kids? What does Lady Gaga add to the equation?*

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