

Honourable Mention: Preservation Hall by Mark Flowerdew

I squeeze through the crowd like a worm digging into an apple.
The smell of these unwashed, wet-whistled tourists does not dampen my excitement.
I sit on a narrow bench by the wall, clothed in heat.
The busy air sticks in my mouth like peanut butter.
The dark walls wear old paintings and nostalgic knick-knacks;
the uneven floorboards flaunt the scent of forty-year-old varnish.
I encourage the final dry crumbs of a gingerbread man to go down my throat.
Then, like unwrapping a present, the instruments tell us why we came.
Melodies interact with the joy of children playing.
The scattered audience is roused, as if hearing a secret.
I am lucky enough to know this secret.
I am meeting the mother of jazz.