

MUSIC CENTER
STRATHMORE

Strathmore presents

**ELECTRIC ROOT
PRESENTS:
THE SOUND OF
(BLACK) MUSIC**

Sunday, March 30, 2025, 8pm



AARP[®]

Strathmore extends its gratitude to AARP for its generous support and for making this program possible.

MEET THE PERFORMERS



JOHN LUMPKIN

drums (he/him)

John Lumpkin II is an educator, producer, and artist. He obtained a bachelor's degree in jazz studies from the University of North Florida under the direction of Danny Gottlieb and a master's degree from Florida State University under the leadership of Leon Anderson. In 2009, he was also a part of the Ravinia Steans music institute and Betty Carter Jazz Ahead program. John grew up in the Pentecostal church and still plans to exercise his gifts there as well as in other national venues. However, he says "The church is the root of my zeal for music and forever shall be."

While carrying his talents between Japan and Switzerland, he has also internationally been a part of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Artist-in-Residence program. In 2017, Wynton Marsalis combined with the Dr. Phillips Fine Arts Center in Orlando, FL, to create the Dr. Phillips Jazz Orchestra, of which John was a part.

Along with his passion for the church, he is also a part of Beyond Music. Beyond Music is an online platform where artists from around the world can create music. The co-founder, Tina Turner, is one of the founding Ambassadors for this movement and the artistic directors have been Larry Klien, Manu Kathe, Michael League, and Bill Laurance.

Throughout his career, John has shared the stage with artists such as Delfeayo Marsalis, Sean Jones, Marcus Roberts, Arturo Sandoval, Curtis Fuller, Doug Carn, Houston Person, Rufus Reid, Vanessa Rubin, James Moody, Nathan Davis, and David Baker. From serving on staff at the University of North Florida and Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, he is also the founder of the Jazz Discovery Series, The John Lumpkin Institute, and The Covenant, which extends to the community based in Jacksonville, FL, and abroad. His level of expectancy drives him to see many other things emerging from his gift of music to the world through his faith.



NOLAN NWACHUKWU

bass (he/him)

Nolan Nwachukwu is a bassist, composer, and producer based in New York City. Originally from South Florida, Nolan studied jazz and classical bass at the Dillard Center for the Arts (DCA) under the direction of Christopher Dorsey. With Nolan on bass, the DCA band achieved two straight

top-three finishes at the Essentially Ellington national competition, including an award for outstanding rhythm section and an honorable mention on bass. Currently, he attends the Manhattan School of Music, a leading conservatory in New York, under the guidance of world renowned bassist Buster Williams. Nolan has been able to study under and work with acclaimed musicians such as Kendrick Scott, J'Nai Bridges, Damien Sneed, Michael Mwenso, Ingrid Jensen, Marc Cary, Jaleel Shaw, Sean Jones, Milton Suggs, Willerm Delisfort, Etienne Charles, and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.



XANDER NAYLOR

guitar (he/him)

Xander Naylor is a guitarist and composer whose music pays tribute to the generations before him, blending elements of jazz, rock, and Indian classical music, into what *Rolling Stone* describes as "that signature Naylor sound." Born of his own spiritual journey and deep study of multiple Eastern and Western traditions, Naylor's music has brought him to perform in concerts and festivals all over the world.

Studying the music of India with tabla maestro Samir Chatterjee since 2008, Naylor has worked to adapt the sounds and techniques of North Indian classical music onto the guitar and find a place for them within Western styles.

Naylor continues to grow as a performer and composer, presenting new works regularly with a variety of groups. In 2021, Naylor was awarded the state of Vermont's Creation Grant, to record an album of original compositions fusing jazz with Indian classical elements. Moving beyond his usual scope of work, in 2022, Naylor had the pleasure of scoring the feature film, *Hayseed*.



WILLERM DELISFORT

piano/keys (he/him)

Pianist and composer, Willerm Delisfort, is a messenger of life using music as his tool. His career extends the continuum of musical styles that spans jazz, gospel, R&B, and many more. Willerm's versatility has created a high demand for him with prominent jazz, rap, soul, and fusion artists including 2009 Best World Guitarist Fareed Haque, Grammy Award-winning artist T-Pain, Melton Mustafa, Lew Soloff, Calvin Newborn, Dezron Douglas Black Lion, Baylor Project, Ben Williams, Corey Wallace Dubtet, Brent Birkhead, and more.



RUBEN FOX

saxophone (he/him)

Hailing from Brixton, South London, and residing in Harlem, New York, Ruben Fox is a unique voice of the saxophone today, noted for the density of his sound and an affliction for ballads. Fox has performed with legends such as Wynton Marsalis, Barry Harris, Roy Ayers, George Coleman, Roy Hargrove, Albert ‘Tootie’ Heath, and Johnny O’Neill. He is also associated with many great artists of his generation, including Jon Batiste, Emmet Cohen, Mwenso and The Shakes, Reuben James, and Mark Kavuma. His debut album, *Introducing Ruben Fox*, arrived to critical acclaim in 2021, making Fox an artist in ascendency.



RASHAAN SALAAM

trombone (he/him)

Rashaan Salaam was born and raised in Miami, Florida, and has been infatuated with music since childhood. His family is originally from Trinidad and Tobago, so from a young age, he was influenced by calypso and soca music. Salaam started playing music in third grade when he began piano lessons after his mother noticed he would spend hours playing on a toy keyboard that his little sister received for Christmas. Salaam’s grandfather was a violinist and a pianist, however, he passed away exactly a year before Salaam was born on September 2, 1997. After a few years of studying piano, Salaam transferred to a performing arts elementary school where he was given a trombone. Despite spending most of the year without a band director, his new school introduced Salaam to a performing arts middle school where he experienced a jazz band performance, sparking an interest in jazz. Being introduced to masters such as Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and J.J. Johnson changed his life forever. After attending summer jazz workshops every summer of middle school, Salaam was already a member of the top jazz band in high school. During this time, Salaam received the opportunity to go to New York City in order to participate in the Essentially Ellington National Jazz Competition, his first opportunity to be around hundreds of musicians from different backgrounds and cultures who all played so well. This trip showed Salaam that New York was the place for him to thrive musically, but that he had to put in a lot of work to make a career in the Big Apple. Salaam aspired to attend the Juilliard School, is grateful for his musical journey and is excited to see what his future holds.



C. ANTHONY BRYANT

vocals (he/him/they/them)

C. Anthony Bryant, an alumnus of Atlanta’s historic and prestigious Morehouse College (BA) and the Manhattan School of Music (MM), stands out as a remarkably versatile and technically adept voice in our contemporary era.

Renowned as a sought-after vocalist, eloquent orator, esteemed instructor, prolific composer, skillful choral conductor, dedicated coach, and accomplished program manager, C. Anthony has graced worship spaces, intimate clubs, and renowned concert halls around the globe.

Born in Washington, DC, C. Anthony’s musical journey commenced at the age of two, singing alongside his family and in the embrace of his local church. From this humble beginning, his musical career has evolved into a dazzling trajectory, continuously expanding in ways beyond imagination.

Presently calling New York City home, C. Anthony holds the position of music leader at Park Avenue Christian Church. This role follows his tenure as the music visionary at First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem, NY, and seven years of dedicated service at The Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York, where he served as worship leader and Minister of Music for Youth.

Although he proudly identifies as a “church boy,” C. Anthony’s vocal prowess transcends boundaries, encompassing a diverse range of genres and styles. From commanding the classical stage to captivating audiences with residencies at renowned venues like Minton’s Playhouse and Ginny’s Supper Club, as well as multiple performances with Jazz at Lincoln Center, C. Anthony is a vocal dynamo.

C. Anthony’s cinematic credits include contributions to films such as *The Fighting Temptations* (2003), *Red Hook Summer* (2012), and BET’s *Holler If You Hear Me: Black and Gay In The Church* (2015). Yet, his true passion is palpable when he graces the stage or enters the recording studio. His extensive body of work as a background vocalist and arranger attests to his exceptional talent.

In January 2015, C. Anthony celebrated the release of his inaugural solo album, *Hymnody vol. 1*. Currently, he is immersed in crafting his second recording project with his band, 5th Sunday. As his journey continues to unfold, C. Anthony Bryant remains a shining star in the world of music, captivating audiences and leaving an indelible mark on the industry.



ZHANNA REED

vocals (she / her)

Zhanna Reed is an artist who loves to explore new creative paths. She is a model, vocalist, actress, dancer and occasional leftie.

Blooming in Buffalo, NY, where she currently holds the local title, Miss Niagara 2023 (MAO/MNYO), she serves the Buffalo-Niagara region with her initiative Live LAB With Me. Her work focuses on self-expression, identity exploration, and inter-generational healing through art.

Devoted service, research, and natural leadership led her to the distinguished honor of becoming a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Buffalo State University of New York, from where she holds a bachelor of arts degree, the arts and humanities dean’s award, and the SUNY Chancellor’s Award.

Multi-hyphenate, Zhanna Reed is renowned to captivate with her divine mix of grace and boldness. Her work has been featured in *Buffalo Spree* magazine and Arts Collaboratory *Live Your Art at Home*. She is an artist in an ongoing practice, research, and performance study with Naila Ansari, “The Movement of Joy,” a new member of the MahataMmoho Collective, and has performed with Emmy winning Mwenso and The Shakes. Zhanna has been blessed with opportunities, collaborating, performing and traveling abroad to expand and share her gifts. More recently, she starred as the lead role, Ti Moune, in Shea’s 710 Theater debut production of *Once On This Island*, which newsed rave reviews from sources such as Broadway world.

Zhanna vied for the job of Miss NY in 2023 and continues using her art and platforms for humanitarianism. “Art can be a get-a-way but we must use it as a gate-way...” (Zhelré)



CHARENEE WADE

vocals and music director (she / her)

Charenee Wade, first runner-up in the 2010 Thelonious Monk Vocal Competition, award-winning and critically acclaimed vocalist, arranger, educator, and composer from New York City, has excited audiences all over the world with her ingenuity and vibrancy through her artistry. She was the recipient of the 2017 Jazz at Lincoln Center Millennial Swing Award and has worked with notable artists including Wynton Marsalis, Terri Lyne Carrington, Christian McBride, Winard Harper, Eric Reed, Jacky Terrason, Curtis Lundy, Robert Glasper, and Kyle Abraham (MacArthur Genius Awardee).

Wade’s current CD, *Offering: The Music of Gil Scott-*

Heron and Brian Jackson, is a powerful re-interpretation of the poet’s musical library, which features notable artists including Lonnie Plaxico, Marcus Miller, Stefon Harris, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, and Christian McBride (spoken word).

An alumni of Manhattan School of Music and Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts, Wade has performed at some of the top venues including Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Jazz Standard, and The Apollo, and has performed at major festivals worldwide including Montreux, the Copenhagen Jazz Festival, Istanbul Jazz Festival, Spoleto, Savannah Music, Jazz En Tete, Bern Jazz Festival, and Charlie Parker Jazz Festival. As an educator, Wade has taught masterclasses, clinics, and jazz camps in the US and all over the world. She is currently an instructor at Aaron Copland School, Peabody Institute of John Hopkins University, and The Juilliard School.



BRIANNA THOMAS

vocals (she / her)

Vocalist, composer, arranger Brianna

Thomas is one of the most evocative and accomplished vocalists of her generation.

Blessed with a sublime and soulfully syncopated soprano voice that scats, swoons, and croons at the speed of swing, Thomas has worked with a plethora of jazz stars, from Clark Terry, Dianne Reeves, and Russell Malone to Houston Person, the Count Basie Orchestra, Wynton Marsalis, and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and is featured on Marsalis’ soundtrack to the motion picture, *Bolden*. She has also performed on a nationwide tour with Michael Mwenso and the Shakes and at several premiere venues including Ginny’s Supper Club, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Detroit Symphony Hall, The Kennedy Center, the Montreux Jazz Festival, and The Apollo Theater. Thomas grew up in the Midwest, surrounded by music at an early age. Her mother, a non-musician, had an eclectic record collection that included Bessie Smith, Dinah Washington, and James Brown, and her father, drummer/vocalist Charlie “CJ” Thomas, took her to clubs when she was an infant, and she sang in his groups when she was six. Brianna’s latest CD, *Everybody Knows*, received 4 ½ stars in *Billboard* magazine.



VANISHA GOULD

vocals (she / her)

Vanisha Gould came to New York in 2015 from Simi Valley, California. Inspired by artists like Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Joni Mitchell, Carmen McRae, and Ella Fitzgerald—Vanisha

has successfully curated her own sound as a composer and band leader. Performing originals and music from the Great American Songbook on several groundbreaking stages both in New York and overseas, she aspires to continue sharing her voice with audiences in New York and beyond.

Electric Root is a dynamic and vibrant collective of artists with a powerful mission—to heal, uplift, and bring joy to diverse communities across the United States through the soul-stirring brilliance of Black music.

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