

JAZZ  LINCOLN CENTER PRESENTS

New Orleans

Songbook

THE SPIRIT OF MARDI GRAS

featuring Quiana Lynell, Milton Suggs & Luther S. Allison

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presents



JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER PRESENTS brings the soul of New Orleans and the spirit of Mardi Gras to this amazing evening, celebrating the composers and inspired songs of the Crescent City, the historic epicenter of jazz. From Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong to Ellis Marsalis and James Black, New Orleans has long been an apex of innovation and inspiration. Led by pianist, Luther S. Allison and vocalists Quiana Lynell and Milton Suggs, New Orleans Songbook immerses audiences in the captivating and timeless spirit of this vibrant city.

For over three decades, Jazz at Lincoln Center has been a leading advocate for jazz, culture, and arts education globally. Under the direction of Wynton Marsalis, Jazz at Lincoln Center has brought the art form of jazz from the heart of New York City to over 446 cities in more than 40 countries.

The JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER PRESENTS touring initiative provides an affordable opportunity to present great jazz programming, featuring up-and-coming musicians who have been identified as rising stars by JALC. The initiative also allows for expansion of the mission of JALC “to entertain, enrich and expand a global community for jazz through performance, education, and advocacy.”

Approximately 150,000 students participate in Jazz at Lincoln Center’s education programs each year. “What is Jazz?”, from the renowned education department at JALC is being offered in conjunction with the tour.

PERFORMANCE DATE
PERFORMANCE VENUE

This tour appears by arrangement with
IMG Artists and is represented by Toby Tumarkin.

www.IMGartists.com

www.jazz.org

WHO'S WHO



Luther S. Allison
(Music Director, Piano)



Quiana Lynell
(Vocals)



Milton Suggs
(Vocals)



Marcus Grant
(Drums)



Brandon Woody
(Trumpet)



Markus Howell
(Saxophone)
Until 3/3



Patrick Hill
(Saxophone)
Starting 3/3



Liany Mateo
(Bass)
1/21-2/5, 2/9-2/22,
3/10-4/6, 2025



Jonathon S. Muir-Cotton
(Bass)
2/6-8, 2/23-3/9, 2025



Gina Benalcázar López
(Trombone)
1/22-2/7, 2025
2/20-2/22, 2025
4/4-4/6, 2025



Mariel Bildsten
(Trombone)
2/8-4/6, 2025



Joe Giordano
(Trombone)
2/15-2/16, 2025

Luther S. Allison (*Music Director/Piano*) Hailing from Charlotte, North Carolina, Luther S. Allison is a multi-instrumentalist specializing in both piano and drum set. In 2017 Allison earned his BM in Studio Music & Jazz from The University of Tennessee and his MM in Jazz Studies from Michigan State University in 2019. Early on in his collegiate studies, Allison was recruited by trombonist Michael Dease to record on his 2016 release *Father Figure* with Posi-Tone Records, becoming Allison's professional recording debut at 19 years old. Soon after, Allison went on to record as a sideman on several more albums with Posi-Tone Records including Diego Rivera's *Connections* (piano) Michael Dease's *Reaching Out* (piano), Dease's *Give It All You Got* (drums), Dease's *Never More Here* (piano), and Markus Howell's *Get Right* (drums). Allison is a Grammy Award winning pianist with Samara Joy on her 2023 release "Tight" and performed on the Grammy stage alongside Samara Joy the year prior. Upon graduation, Allison moved to New York City where he quickly became a regular on the bandstand at some of the city's premiere jazz clubs including Dizzy's, Smalls Jazz Club, The Jazz Standard, Mezzrow, Smoke Jazz Club, and Minton's. Allison has performed nationally and internationally alongside the likes of Rodney Whitaker, Jazzmeia Horn, The Baylor Project, Samara Joy, Gregory Tardy, Ulysses Owens Jr. and many more. In addition to teaching on faculty every year at the Brevard Jazz Institute summer camp in North Carolina, Allison has worked as a clinician in Mexico, China, Japan, Switzerland, St. Lucia, and Trinidad & Tobago. Outside of his work as a

sideman, Allison band-leads his trio, sextet, and octet featuring original compositions and arrangements rooted in his influences from all forms of black American music. Additionally, Allison co-leads a project with dancer John Manzari.

Quiana Lynell (*Vocals*) Quiana Lynell is a dynamic vocalist, music educator, and advocate whose artistry spans jazz, soul, gospel, and blues. Raised in Texas and deeply influenced by her musical roots in church and the rich cultural landscape from Texas to New Orleans, she developed a unique style that blends musical tradition with a contemporary edge.

In 2017, Quiana gained national recognition by winning the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, propelling her career to new heights. Her debut album, *A Little Love*, released in 2019 on Concord Records, was met with critical acclaim, with DownBeat Magazine praising her "velvety tone and expressive phrasing." The album, produced by Grammy-winner Brian Michel Bacchus, showcases her five-octave range and her ability to reinterpret both originals and classics.

Quiana has performed at prestigious venues such as The Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and the Playboy Jazz Festival, sharing stages with legends like Jon Batiste, Herbie Hancock, and Patti Austin. Her most recent project, *Pillow Talk*, reflects her growth as an artist, exploring themes of self-discovery, love, and reflection.

A passionate educator, Quiana has over 20 years of experience,

teaching at the Interlochen School for the Performing Arts and Loyola University, as well as mentoring young musicians through the Trombone Shorty Foundation. Her commitment to arts education and advocacy is evident in her work as Vice President of the Memphis Chapter of the Recording Academy, where she champions the rights of artists.

Quiana Lynell's performances and teachings are a testament to her belief in the transformative power of music, leaving a lasting impact on audiences and students alike.

Milton Suggs (*Vocals*) Milton Suggs's voice and approach to music is a reflection not only of his direct lineage, but of the many great voices in Black American music and culture from the past century and beyond. Firmly rooted in the blues, Milton sports a rich baritone with the breadth and power reminiscent of singers like Joe Williams, is able to emote with the soulful intensity of singers like Donny Hathaway and achieve a velvet palette suggestive of Nat King Cole. Milton possesses a unique ability to evoke emotion with a masterful sense of phrasing and dynamics. A gifted composer, arranger and lyricist, Milton's music is both honest and inventive, drawing inspiration from a number of influences while forging a singular identity. As a visionary artist, Suggs seeks to pave new roads within the vast traditions that were laid before him; for it is the spirit, struggles, triumphs, and stories from the many generations that preceded him that make up the foundation upon which his own artistry stands. Voted repeatedly a top 10 rising star male

vocalist in DownBeat Magazine's annual critic's poll, the recognition of Milton's talents have continued to grow throughout his years as a fixture in jazz, working with artists and bands such as the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Orrin Evans, Wycliffe Gordon, Ulysses Owens, and Marquis Hill among others. Milton has also been consistent with his own efforts as a recording artist, producing four albums to date and continually developing new projects with new ensembles. Born in Chicago, IL, a third-generation musician, Suggs recognized music as a gift from a young age; it was later that he would accept it as a calling. While growing up in Atlanta, GA, though continually exposed to music of varying styles, it was with his church choir at the age of seven that Milton garnered his first experiences with singing and performance. While in elementary and middle school, he gravitated toward the upright bass, the instrument of his father and namesake, and later played the alto saxophone and drums. However, it was not until after high school that he committed to the pursuit of music as his life's work. Returning to Chicago, he began studying piano with the legendary Willie Pickens, while also honing his craft as a vocalist and performer. In 2012 Milton moved to New York where he immediately took to performing throughout the city, soon branching out internationally as a performer and educator. Presently, Milton Suggs continues to blaze a trail as a vocalist, composer, and educator touring throughout the world as both a collaborator and leader, embracing each opportunity to explore new creative terrain and further the legacy left by his predecessors.

Marcus Grant (*Drums*) Marcus R. Grant is a professional drummer, percussionist, musicologist, and educator from West Chester, Pennsylvania. He is currently a Brown University Ph.D candidate in Musicology & Ethnomusicology with a secondary certificate study in the Department of Africana Studies. Grant holds a bachelor's in jazz performance from Temple University, a Master's jazz performance, a Master's in musicology from the University of Miami (FL), and a Master's in musicology and ethnomusicology from Brown University. His research focuses on Black American protest music which includes hip-hop, gospel, and jazz studies. As a performer, Grant has shared the stage with Shelly Berg, Victor Goines, Warren Wolf, Dave Liebman, Nestor Torres, Ben Wolfe, Nicki Parrott among others.

Gina Benalcázar López (*Trombone*) (1/22-2/7, 2/20-2/22, 4/4-4/6, 2025) Gina Benalcázar López is an Ecuadorian Honduran- American composer and low brass specialist. Influenced by straight-ahead jazz, latin-jazz, and popular Latin American music, Gina has performed with and arranged/composed for various size bands ranging in style from Classical Chamber to Jazz Big Band and Salsa Bands. She has worked with some of the world's most prolific band leaders and can be found playing with Jazz at Lincoln Center, Lulada Club, The Broadway Sinfonietta, The Roy Hargrove Big Band, Etienne Charles' Creole Soul, DarcyJames Argue's Secret Society, The Rufus Reid Big Band, Dee The Dee Bridgewater Big Band, Ulysses Owens Jr's New Century Big Band, Helen Sung's Big Band, The Ted Nash Big Band,

and beyond, and had her Broadway debut on the Huey Lewis show *The Heart of Rock and Roll*. Gina's discography is expansive, credited her as both soloist and arranger/composer and as a side-person. Her full discography can be found on her website. As a band leader Gina was selected as a recipient of Chamber Music America's Performance Plus Grant which helped her record her debut album, *The BOUNCE* featuring her original compositions. She now performs with her band La Orquesta Esa featuring her original music and creative arrangements that take you through all of Latino-American's dance styles, including mambos, calypso, cumbia, tangos, swing and beyond.

Mariel Bildsten (*Trombone*) (2/8-4/6, 2025) Downbeat Magazine calls New York City-based jazz trombonist Mariel Bildsten "irrepressibly spontaneous." Mariel has earned global distinction through her performances with Jon Batiste, Roy Hargrove, Jennifer Hudson, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and the Mingus Big Band at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Radio City Music Hall, London's O2 Arena, the Newport Jazz Festival and the Apollo Theater. Her lyrical and swinging style has thrilled audiences around the world. Mariel Bildsten's band, ranging from duo to septet, headlines jazz festivals, plays internationally, and performs regularly in New York City. Her records *Backbone* (2020) and *Steppin' Out!* (2023) received rave reviews.

Joe Giordano (*Trombone*) (2/15-2/16, 2025) Originally from Albany, New York, Joe Giordano is a trombonist, composer, and educator

based in New York City. He has performed with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra, Arturo O’Farrill, Stefon Harris, Bobby Sanabria, Arthur Verocai, and The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, at venues such as Smalls, The Village Vanguard, Dizzy’s, Rose Hall at Lincoln Center, Birdland, Smoke, The Kennedy Center, and The Guggenheim. Giordano is a graduate of both The Manhattan School of Music and The Juilliard School, where he refined his talents under the guidance of professors Marshall Gilkes, Elliot Mason, Marc Cary, and Charenee Wade. He is a co-winner of the 2020 J.J. Johnson International Jazz Trombone Competition, and an alumnus of the renowned Betty Carter Jazz Ahead Institute, where he workshopped original compositions under the mentorship of Jason Moran. In addition to his performing career, Giordano has taken part in educational initiatives at the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, as well as masterclasses in the New York area, and was invited to teach at the Skidmore Jazz Institute, of which he is a proud alumnus. Giordano is currently recording his debut record, which he looks forward to releasing later this year.

Brandon Woody (*Trumpet*)

The New York Times featured artist Brandon Woody started his musical journey at the age of 7. Since then, Woody has gone on to become an international artist, performing with his band Upendo, curating projects for major museums, film scoring, collaborating with international brands and performing at major venues and institutions around the globe. Woody uses music as a tool for healing, genuine connection

and celebrating community. He has performed at venues and festivals such as Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Meyerhoff, Riverside Church, The Shed and many, many more. Brandon has played as a sideman with Paul Russell, Solange, Standing on The Corner, Klein, Lafayette Gilchrist, Jonathan Barber, Luther S. Allison and many others. Woody started his band UPENDO in 2017 while he was in college at Brubeck Institute and Manhattan school of music studying with Ambrose Akinmusire and Cecile Bridgewater. Since then, Woody has gone on to perform Nationally with regular concerts across the east coast. In 2021, Woody was named a Bach/Conn endorsed Artist and was named the Best musician to watch by the Baltimore Magazine in 2022. Woody works to share his knowledge and love for music with those who want to learn. In his spare time, Woody teaches private group lessons and masterclasses at institutions such as the Peabody Preparatory, University of Maryland, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Poly Technic Institute, Accent Pontiac and public schools such as Cecil Elementary, A Philip Randolph High School, Temple X Schools, and Highlandtown Elementary #215.

Liany Mateo (*Bass*) (*1/21-2/5, 2/9-2/22, 3/10-4/6, 2025*) Named one of Downbeat Magazine’s “25 For the Future,” Liany Mateo has traveled across the globe performing, touring, and teaching music. Influenced by a mix of hard-hitting straight-ahead swing, Free Avant Garde, and music with deep pocket groove. Mateo is the bassist for Arturo O’Farrill’s Legacies album recorded on Blue Note records. Mateo was also featured on the PBS television show *NEXT* at the

Kennedy Center, as a featured artist introduced as Christian McBride's Protege. She has performed with musicians such as Regina Carter, Geoffrey Keezer, Matthew Whitaker, Carl Allen, Steve Wilson, Fay Victor, and Brandee Younger. She holds a Jazz degree from the esteemed Michigan State University and a Master's degree from the Berklee Global Jazz Institute. In 2023 she won the esteemed Next Jazz Legacy Award and grant through New Music USA, led by Terri Lyne Carrington. You can find her playing across NYC's most notable venues such as Dizzys, Smalls, The Jazz Gallery, The Django, and Mezzrow. In 2024, she was selected for the National Jazz Museum in Harlem's Curatorial Fellowship, programming events at the globally recognized museum.

Jonathon S. Muir-Cotton (*Bass*)

(2/6-8, 2/23-3/9, 2025) Jonathon S. Muir-Cotton is a multi-award winning up and coming double bassist and bassist trained in both the jazz and classical traditions; playing many genres including jazz, funk, gospel, blues, R&B and neo-soul. Under the mentorship and tutelage of great Detroit bassists like Marion Hayden, Robert Hurst, Rick Robinson, Rodney Whitaker and Ralphe Armstrong. Jonathon is working towards making his own mark in the music world. Jonathon has continued to garner great opportunities to perform internationally, with consistent rotations in Detroit, New York, Ann Arbor, and many other venues across the country. Jonathon is also a student at Michigan State University pursuing a degree in Jazz Studies. Muir-Cotton has performed with various renowned artists, including

Common, Soul Science Lab, Ali Jackson, Esperanza Spalding, Ian Finkelstein, and Kamau Kenyatta. Jonathon is currently touring internationally and stateside with Christian Sands, Luther S. Allison, Ulysses Owens Jr., Domo Branch and Ashley Pezzotti. Jonathon has his own talented and versatile extended band, Expressions, and is an often-sought bassist for other artists, their bands, and studio work. Jonathon made his television scoring debut this year with Netflix, Season 2 of *Mo*, produced by Common, Karriem Riggins, and Mohammed Amher. Jonathon continues to hone his craft, hopes to tour the world, and eventually become a music educator, teaching jazz at the collegiate level as well as be an inspiration and give back to the next generation of students and aspiring musicians.

Markus Howell (*Saxophone*) (*Until 3/3*)

Markus Howell is a New York City based jazz saxophonist, composer and educator from Deerfield Beach, Florida. Markus is a Grammy Award winning artist with the Legendary Count Basie Orchestra and tours with international singer and recording artist Michael Bublé. He is an alumnus of Michigan State University with a bachelor's and master's degree in jazz studies. Howell has performed or recorded with top leaders on their respectful instruments and voices including Christian McBride, Rodney Whitaker, Mark Whitfield, Carmen Bradford, Wycliffe Gordon, Billie Eilish, Dianne Reeves, Bobby Rush and Karen Clark Sheard. Markus has also performed in festivals and venues such as Madison Square Garden (New York City), John F. Kennedy Center for The

Performing Arts (Washington D.C.), The Hollywood Bowl (Los Angeles, CA), The Apollo Theater (New York City), Dizzy's Jazz Club (New York City), Yoshi's Jazz Club (Oakland, CA), Blue Note Tokyo (Japan), Detroit Jazz Festival (Detroit, MI) and Birdland Jazz Club (New York City). Markus is a Posi-Tone Records recording artist and strives to present integrity through his music with joy, love, spirituality and deep roots of soul.

Patrick Hill (*Saxophone*) (*Starting 3/3*) is an African American Alto Saxophonist, Woodwind Instrumentalist, Arranger, and Composer. As a native of Dallas, Texas, he grew up under the mentorship of critically acclaimed Alto Saxophonist, Brad Leali. He completed his Undergraduate studies at the University of North Texas with a Bachelors in Jazz Performance. While studying at UNT, Patrick had the opportunity to learn in various ensembles including the UNT Latin Jazz Ensemble under direction of Jose Aponté, The 3 O'Clock Lab Band under direction of Tanya Darby, and the Grammy Nominated 1 O'Clock Lab Band under the direction of Alan Baylock. He has had the pleasure of performing as a side man and bandleader with several revered musicians such as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Joey Defranceso, Mike Boone, Shelley Carroll, Brad Leali, Conrad Herwig, Wycliffe Gordon, Kenny Werner, Ari Hoenig, Quincy Davis, and Kirk Whalum. He obtained his Master's Degree in Jazz Performance at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania under the mentorship of members of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Dick Oatts and Terrell Stafford as well as

Tim Warfield Jr. After graduation, he proceeded to tour with Michael Bublé and his big band performing music from his recent 2022 Grammy award winning record "Higher". While touring, Hill had the opportunity to perform in many different countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and South America. He currently resides in New York City where he is working towards an Artist diploma in Jazz Studies at the Julliard School. During his short time spent at the school and the New York scene, he has already begun to establish himself as a very reliable sideman performing at established venues such as, The Village Vanguard, Smalls Jazz Club, Dizzy's Coco Cola, The Blue Note, Birdland Jazz Club, and the Jazz Gallery. His goal is to present a unique sound to the general and musical public that pays homage to the previous innovators of this music while moving forward his own perception of melody, soul, and swing to bring forth a sense of community.