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## Wynton Marsalis brings Big Band Holidays show to the Keith-Albee

By DEREK HALSEY, For The Herald-Dispatch  
Dec 4, 2016



Courtesy of Clay McBride Acclaimed jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis brings his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, with special guest Catherine Russell to the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center for Big Band Holidays at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8, as part of the Marshall Artists Series.

HUNTINGTON - Wynton Marsalis has been a captain of jazz music almost from the time he came onto the scene decades ago.



A native of New Orleans, where jazz was born, Marsalis grew up in an acclaimed musical family that included his musician father Ellis Marsalis and his fellow musician brothers Branford, Delfeayo and Jason. Marsalis began performing at a young age and was playing with jazz great Art Blakey while still a teenager. By the time he was 20, Marsalis was touring with his own group.

Marsalis has explored funk, blues, classical and world music along the way, but jazz is where his heart truly resides. Throughout his career the trumpeter has won nine Grammy Awards, was appointed a United Nations Messenger of Peace, won a Pulitzer Prize for Music and a United States Medal of Arts, and has received more than 30 honorary doctor of music degrees from universities all over the country.



Courtesy of The Kurland Agency Jazz vocalist Catherine Russell joins Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra for their Big Band Holidays at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 8, 2016, at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center.

About 20 years ago, Marsalis connected his birthplace of jazz roots in New Orleans with the thriving music scene of the Big Apple and helped to create the Jazz at Lincoln Center program. As managing and artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, Marsalis is able to combine his love for playing live music with his equally fervent love for music education and outreach.

The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra is a troupe of 15 musicians that are the best of the best. Local audiences can enjoy all the talent as Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, with special guest Catherine Russell, bring their Big Band Holidays show to the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8, as part of the Marshall Artists Series.

Tickets range from \$45 to \$75. More information can be found at [www.marshall.edu/muartistseries](http://www.marshall.edu/muartistseries) and 304-696-3326.



"We like holiday music because it is a body of music that everybody knows," Marsalis said from his home in New York City. "So, the audience can then understand jazz music in relation to music they already know. If you already know a song, then you can tell what the art of jazz is when it is performed on that song."

He said audiences who aren't familiar with jazz can sometimes have trouble understanding the genre when listening to original jazz compositions or other songs that are unfamiliar to them.

"Christmas music makes it much easier for us, plus the fact that Christmas is the one season where you hear generational music around the clock," he said. "So, you're not just relegated to something recorded just last year. You're going to hear Andy Williams. You're going to hear Nat Cole and Frank Sinatra and Donny Hathaway. You're going to hear anyone that has made a Christmas album."

When you listen to Christmas music made by artists with a jazz sensibility like Tony Bennett, Michael Buble, Harry Connick Jr. and many others, the charts that are written for those standard holiday songs are what make it swing. The musicians that write the charts for the other musicians in the band are called the arrangers. The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra is full of them.

"In our band, we have 11 arrangers," Marsalis said. "And, they are fantastic. When we do shows with people like Chick Corea and Wayne Shorter, when we're talking about the music, I tell them we have 11 arrangers, and they are like, 'Man, come on.' Then, when we sit in rehearsal, every time there is a new arrangement it's like, 'Who did that one? Who did that one?' So, at the end of the first day of rehearsals, after working out six or seven songs, they are saying, 'Man, you wasn't lying.' (On this tour), we are being musically directed by Sherman Irby, and he is an unbelievable arranger and also plays alto sax in the band."

Along with Marsalis on trumpet and Irby on alto sax, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra features Walter Blanding on sax, Chris Crenshaw on trombone, Vincent Gardner on trombone, Victor Goines on sax, Carlos Henriquez on bass, Ali Jackson on drums, Ryan Kisor on trumpet, Elliot Mason on trombone, Ted Nash on sax, Paul Nedzela on sax, Dan Nimmer on keyboards, Marcus Printup on trumpet, Kenny Rampton on trumpet and Joe Temperley on sax.

At this holiday show, Marsalis and crew will be featuring a special guest vocalist named Catherine Russell.



"Catherine is an unbelievably fantastic vocalist," Marsalis said. "She comes from a family that is royalty in jazz with her father being Luis Russell (pianist and arranger who was Louis Armstrong's long-time musical director) and her mother being musician Carline Ray. Catherine is tremendous to deal with and to play with, and she is so much from our musical world. She has such a deeply soulful feeling and presence that we are looking forward to just being in her presence. She will definitely leave people feeling good," he said.

Marsalis said the holiday production is sure to leave the audience smiling.

"This show is going to be swinging. People are going to be leaving out of there happy. You are going to be hearing some of the best musicians in the world because our band is for real," Marsalis said.

If you go

WHO: Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with special guest Catherine Russell, as part of the Marshall Artists Series.

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8.

WHERE: The Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, 1021 4th Ave., Huntington.

TICKETS: Tickets range from \$45 to \$75. More information can be found at [www.marshall.edu/muartistseries](http://www.marshall.edu/muartistseries) and 304-696-3326.

UPCOMING: The second half of the Marshall Artists Series season kicks off Jan. 24, 2017, with "Cinderella," presented by the State Ballet Theatre of Russia at 7 p.m. Other shows in the series include: English writer, poet and naturalist Helen Macdonald presents "H is for Hawk" at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 4, at the Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center; celebrated R&B and jazz vocalist Freda Payne performs at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center; the quintessential backstage musical comedy classic "42nd Street" takes the stage at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center on Saturday, Feb. 18; the Keith-Albee hosts the Spring International Film Festival from Thursday, March 2, to Sunday, March 5; the high-flying hit Broadway musical "Pippin" comes to the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center on Tuesday, April 4; and the season closes with the annual Uncorked! fundraiser, set for Saturday, April 29, at 21 @ The Frederick. For more information, visit [www.marshall.edu/muartistseries](http://www.marshall.edu/muartistseries).



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