



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

ARCHIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
MUSIC AND CULTURE

Jazz Women: Hear My Voice (For Immediate Release)

Concert Event: *Jazz Women: Hear My Voice*, hosted by the Archives of African American Music and Culture

Date: Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Time: 6:30pm, doors open at 5:45pm

Venue: FAR Center for Contemporary Arts

Admission: Free and open to the public

Sponsors: The City of Bloomington, and The Neal Marshall Black Culture Center

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Rationale: The Archives of African American Music and Culture will host *Jazz Women: Hear My Voice*, a concert celebrating the legacy of Black women in jazz. While many people have contributed to the evolution of jazz, from the beginning of the genre, Black women have served in strategic roles as instrumentalists, arrangers, composers, singers, bandleaders and mentors, which advanced the careers of some of the most popular figures in the tradition from Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington to Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie. However, women like Lil Hardin Armstrong and Mary Lou Williams, among others have often been relegated to the margins of jazz history, while they simultaneously shaped the genre as cultural expression and commodity. In celebration of the longstanding contributions of Black women, *Jazz Women: Hear My Voice* features three unique vocalists, New York City's rising star Ekep Nkwelle, and Indianapolis's premier songstresses Sandy Lomax and Brenda Williams. Each performer will showcase a full range of songs, styles and lived experiences that have defined, elevated and sustained jazz within and beyond the Black community. Internationally acclaimed New York-based pianist Luther Allison will accompany Ekep Nkwelle. Sandy Lomax and Brenda Williams will be accompanied by an all-star band from Indianapolis, led by music director and bassist Bill Myers, former President of the African American Jazz Caucus, Inc. Other musicians include Cassius Goens (drums), Kevin Anker (keyboard), Steve Weakley (guitar), and Clifford Ratliff (trumpet).

Ekep Nkwelle: At just 25 years old, Ekep Nkwelle, a Cameroonian-American jazz vocalist, has made a remarkable journey from the vibrant streets of Washington, DC, to the heart of New York City's jazz scene. Her artistic path has been shaped by her education at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Howard University, and The Julliard School, institutions that have nurtured her extraordinary talent. With a voice that has captivated jazz legends such as Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, the late Russell Malone, Cyrus Chestnut, and Peter Washington, Ekep Nkwelle has found herself collaborating in national and international venues with some of the most revered names in the genre.

Sandy Lomax: Indianapolis-native Sandy Lomax, affectionately known as "Indy's Queen of Scat," is a dynamic jazz vocalist and entertainer who has become a cornerstone of the Indianapolis music scene since the 1970s. Lomax has earned her royal title through her masterful command of scat singing and her ability to captivate audiences with her versatile soprano and alto range. Along with collaborating with notable Indianapolis-based groups such as Bill Myers and The Trash Collectors and Al Finnell and The Indy Jazzmen Band, she has performed in Hawaii's famous Marrakech Lounge with group Pure Innergy, and in Germany with The Thomas Fink Trio. Recognized for her significant contributions to the arts, Lomax was honored as a Living Legend at the 2019 Arts & Soul event in Indianapolis. Her enduring passion for jazz and her commitment to keeping the art of scat singing alive defines her beyond mere performer. Sandy Lomax is a vital curator of this uniquely American art form.



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Brenda Williams: Brenda Williams is a dynamic and vivacious singer and actress based in the Indianapolis area. Her style is versatile, ranging from sultry jazz standards to powerful Motown classics. For over 30-years, Williams has been a celebrated award-winning vocalist and actress performing in staple Indianapolis venues such as the Jazz Kitchen, The Cabaret, and the Indiana Repertory Theatre. She has collaborated with renowned Indianapolis artists such as the Jackson Street Orchestra featuring Williams and Chooch Kennedy, in addition to working with the Indy Blues Revue. She has opened for famed artists Ray Charles, The Beach Boys, and Chuck Mangione, to name a few. Additionally, Williams performed for United States Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and William (Bill) J. Clinton. Her honors include being spotlighted by the Indianapolis Woman Magazine for the publication's Local Female Musician Choice Award, recognized by the *Indianapolis Star* as one of the Top People To Watch, and Second Runner-Up to the Mrs. America Title. Of all her accomplishments, Brenda Williams states, "My first heart is, and always has been, jazz."