

A Note From *Bill's Desk*

McCarter

Get a behind-the-scenes glimpse via Bill Lockwood, Director of Special Programming at McCarter, about how and why he brings phenomenal artists to our McCarter stages. This week, he spotlights upcoming Jazz performances at McCarter.

Jazz at McCarter:

- Branford Marsalis Quartet: February 3
- Arturo O’Farrill’s Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra: February 19 (with special guest Ayodele Casel)
- Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra: April 9

January 11, 2022

What’s better than one Marsalis brother? How about two? Call it some kind of serendipity, but McCarter is preparing to welcome two of the Marsalis brothers – America’s “first family of Jazz” – in the coming months: both Branford (the eldest of the four) and his “younger brother” Wynton.

Branford and his Quartet lead off on February 3rd. And while jazz remains at the center of his art and recognition as a sax virtuoso, composer and bandleader, his musical horizons have continually expanded to include a multiplicity of other endeavors – from playing classical sax concertos (yes, there are several) with Symphony orchestras to sitting in as the ultimate guest artist with *The Grateful Dead* to composing scores for Broadway, and a stint as the bandleader for television’s *The Tonight Show* – all while picking up a Grammy, a Tony nomination, and designation as an *NEA Jazz Master* along the way.

But the core of Branford’s universe for over thirty year has been his quartet, two members of which – pianist Joey Calderazzo and bassist Eric Revis – have been with him almost from the beginning, now joined by drummer Justin Faulkner. The Quartet’s range remains the same kaleidoscopic mixture of originals as well as jazz and popular classics, as epitomized by the iconographic title of its 2018 recording, *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*.

But there is a “big band” event of equal significance on the more immediate horizon even before Wynton and his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra visit on April 9th. Arturo O’Farrill’s Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra on February 19th, celebrates the pianist’s commitment to a meld of Caribbean musical culture and homegrown jazz, a blend which has become not only his band’s signature, but a blend we don’t get to hear that often. The ALJO carries on the legacy of ambitious and sophisticated Latin jazz immortalized by Arturo’s legendary father Chico, who was a pioneer in fusing Cuban rhythms with jazz techniques.

But wait, there's more: one of Arturo O'Farrill's recent collaborations has been with the extraordinary tap dancer Ayodele Casel, who will join him on the McCarter stage on February 19th. On the cusp of stardom, Casel has helped the great American dance art of tap enjoy its sea change, and has become a powerful voice for the art form. As a performer, she has become an overnight sensation, which helps explain why *The New York Times* calls her partnership with O'Farrill a "knockout joyfest."

P.S. McCarter's third edition of Jazz in June is coming back to the Berlind – but more about that later!

—William L. Lockwood, Jr.
Director of Special Programming

