



Meredith Traux

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24|25 SEASON

SAMARA JOY

FRI, OCT 18, 7:30 pm
Hodgson Concert Hall

Program to be announced from the stage.

Supported by
LAURA W. CARTER

Please silence all mobile phones and electronic devices. Photography, video and audio recording, and texting are prohibited during the performance.



PERSONNEL

Samara Joy, vocals
Paul Sikivie, bass
Cameron Campbell, piano
Evan Sherman, drums
Donavan Austin, trombone
Jason Charos, trumpet
David Mason, alto saxophone
Kendic McCallister, tenor saxophone
Tim Wong, front of house engineer
Karine Wong, road manager



Ambe J. Williams

ABOUT THE ARTIST

SAMARA JOY

With three Grammy wins and a chart-topping debut album already under her belt, 24-year-old Samara Joy makes her case to join the likes of Sarah, Ella, and Billie as the next mononymous jazz singing sensation recorded by the venerable Verve Records. Her voice, rich and velvety yet precociously refined, has already earned her fans like Anita Baker and Regina King and appearances on the Today Show, The Tonight Show w/Jimmy Fallon, The Late Show w/Stephen Colbert, CBS Mornings, Kelly Clarkson, Jennifer Hudson, and more, in addition to millions of likes on TikTok—securing her status as perhaps the first Gen Z jazz vocal star. The *New York Times* praised the “silky-voiced rising star” for “helping jazz take a youthful turn” while NPR’s All Things Considered named her a “classic jazz singer from a new generation.”

Samara is still relatively new to jazz. Growing up in the Castle Hill neighborhood of the Bronx, it was music of the past—the music of her parent’s childhoods, as she put it—that she listened to most. She treasures her musical lineage, which stretches back to her grandparents Elder Goldwire and Ruth McLendon, both of whom performed with Philadelphia gospel group the Savettes, and runs through her father, who is a vocalist and bassist who toured with gospel artist Andraé Crouch. Though she’s young, she relishes the process of digging through the music’s history. “I think maybe people connect with the fact that I’m not faking it, that I already feel embedded in it,” Samara says. “Maybe I’m able to reach people in person and on social media because it’s real.”

Samara began singing jazz as a senior at Fordham High School for the Arts and was awarded Best Vocalist at Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Essentially Ellington competition. Following her graduation as valedictorian, she attended the jazz program at SUNY Purchase, where she became the school’s Ella Fitzgerald Scholar and graduated Magna Cum Laude. While in college, she also won the 2019 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, one of the most sought-after honors for a rising jazz performer. The competition’s judges were Dee Dee Bridgewater, Jane Monheit, Christian McBride, and producer Matt Pierson, who would eventually become her manager. In July 2021, the same year she graduated from SUNY Purchase, Samara released her self-titled debut on Whirlwind Recordings.

On her debut album for Verve Records, *Linger Awhile*, which was produced by Pierson and recorded by Chris Allen at Sear Sound in NYC, Samara is accompanied by esteemed veterans: Her former professors, guitarist Pasquale Grasso and drummer Kenny Washington, form the core of the band, which also includes bassist David Wong and pianist Ben Paterson. With ease and a preternatural assurance, Samara swings right alongside them through understated yet powerful renditions of this creative collection of standards.

There are burnished, gleaming versions of chestnuts in “Misty,” “Linger Awhile” and “Someone to Watch Over Me,” transporting listeners to some romantic, long-lost supper club. Those familiar tunes are listed alongside some more unusual,

if equally vintage selections: “Sweet Pumpkin,” a Ronnell Bright tune performed by the likes of Blue Mitchell and Gloria Lynne, a fresh take on “Guess Who I Saw Today” (a story of infidelity famously told by Nancy Wilson), and “Can’t Get Out Of This Mood,” which Samara uncovered on a collection of Sarah Vaughan rarities, add a lilting, upbeat bent to the album’s selections.

In February 2023, Samara took home two Grammys— Best Jazz Vocal Album for *Linger Awhile* and the highly sought after Best New Artist statuette. In a relatively short time, Samara has toured throughout Europe and the U.S., making stops at legendary festivals including the Newport Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Barbican Center in London, Nice Jazz Festival, and Philharmonie Paris. 2023 also saw Samara headlining iconic venues including sold out shows in her native New York at The Village Vanguard, The Apollo, Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Rose Hall, and the Blue Note Jazz Club.

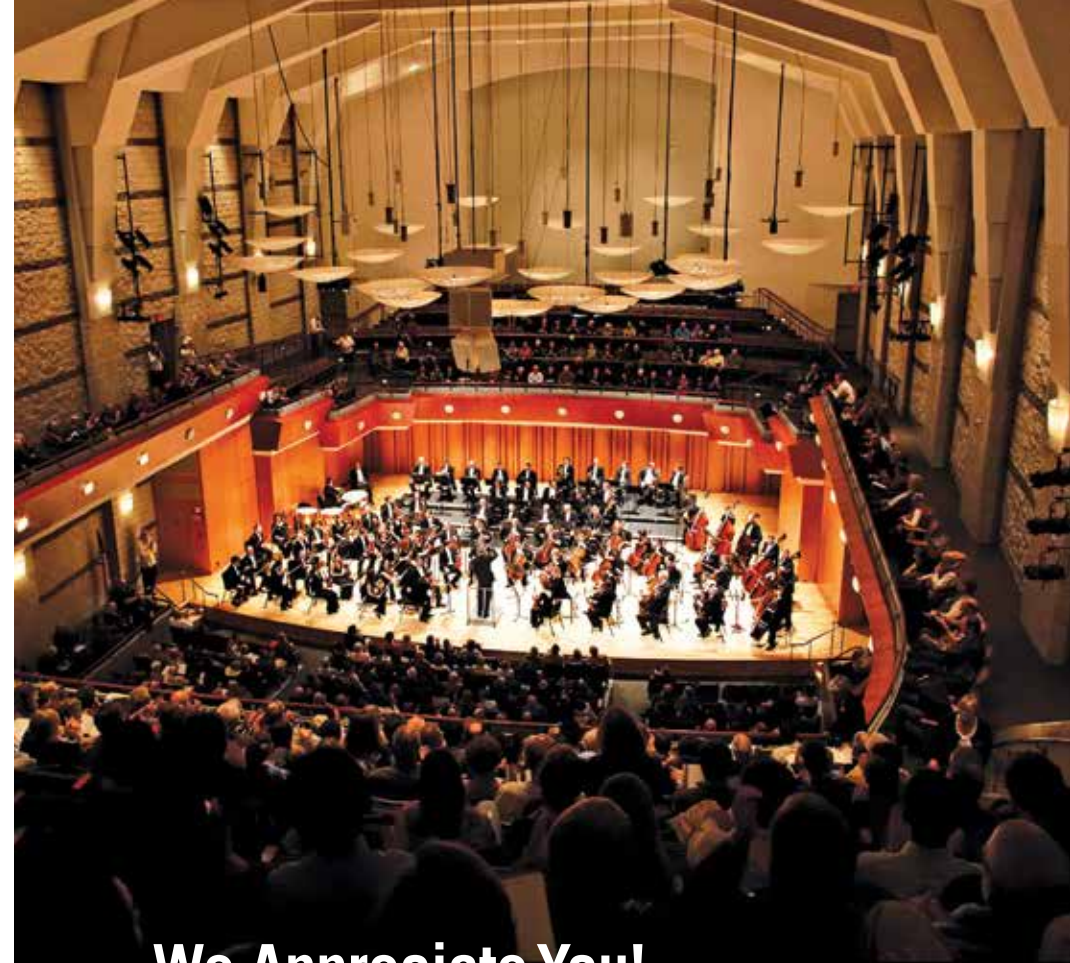
In October 2023, Samara released her holiday EP *A Joyful Holiday*, 6-song collection of seasonal favorites that included a rendition “O Holy Night” performed with multiple generations of her family. The EP also features a swinging arrangement of “Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas” as well as a new recording of Stevie Wonder’s “Twinkle Twinkle Little Me.” In December, accompanied by members of her family and other special guests, Samara toured the U.S., selling out nearly every performance.

Cementing herself as a rising star in the worlds of both music and fashion, Samara fronted a holiday campaign for the fashion label Theory, a partnership befitting her timeless onstage style and casual elegance. The campaign also featured Samara’s original song “Now and Then,” a track she dedicated to her late mentor Barry Harris, whose famous jazz workshops she had regularly attended.

In 2024, at the 66th Grammy Awards she added on to her growing collection of accolades by taking home Best Jazz Performance for her single “Tight.” The self-produced track features Joy with her working band (pianist Luther Allison, bassist Mikey Migliore and drummer Evan Sherman), and was recorded at the legendary Electric Lady Studios in NYC.

Most recently, the breakout vocalist released the original single “Why I’m Here.” This incredibly triumphant and rousing track from the Netflix film *Shirley* (starring Oscar winner Regina King), further establishes Samara as a voice to be reckoned with, not just in the world of jazz but effortlessly across genres. Written by Samara and fellow multiple Grammy winner PJ Morton, the anthemic song plays over *Shirley*’s end title credits.

The ascendant, 3x Grammy-winning vocalist, who continues to tour all over the world on increasingly larger stages—is still shocked to be performing in front of thousands who hang on every word. “I’m still very much a student, even though I’ve graduated,” Samara says. “So this is only the beginning ... there is much, much more to come.”



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Contact the development coordinator, Carlton Bain, at (706) 542-2031 or cbain@uga.edu.

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