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25|26 SEASON

Tord Gustavsen Trio

FRI, MAR 27, 7:30 pm
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TORD GUSTAVSEN TRIO

TORD GUSTAVSEN, piano and electronics

STEINAR RAKNES, double bass

JARLE VESPESTAD, drums

Program to be announced from the stage.

This performance is part of Nordic Dream: Voices from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

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

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

Writer Albert Murray often described the creative process of musicians as the act of taking things you love and extending, elaborating, and refining them into new work. This is what Tord Gustavsen and other leading European jazz musicians have done, adopting from the American masters the instrumentation of jazz, the idea of improvising on songs, the idea of talking to each other with their instruments during those improvisations, and applying them to the culture of their homeland. In this way, Europe has brought forth jazz as diverse as its cultures, sounding anew.

For Gustavsen, the musical culture of his Norwegian youth was comprised of singing in the Lutheran church, being surrounded by Scandinavian folk music, and studying classical music. From these sources he has created an altogether new, immediately identifiable sound, true to the American jazz credo — to be who you are and no one else.

As a recent reviewer put it, he “fills the void between clerical hymnology and secular chamber music.” He does not play church music, but his work feels spiritual. He does not play classical chamber music, but his work is sublime and sensitive. He often says his works are “wordless hymns.” But he grooves and dances, too.

Apart from his influences, some core artistic beliefs drive his sound. One is to cherish melody. “If you are to play a melody,” he says, “it has to sound like it is the most important thing in the world here and now.” Another is to have reverence for silence as much as for sound, to say only what needs to be said so as to leave space to savor it. This approach to sound and silence draws audiences into what Gustavsen calls “radical listening,” radical because it is so different from the casual and unfocused listening we so often accept.

His skill in improvisation can be traced to his father, who sat his toddler son next to him on the piano bench and encouraged their four hands to play, both in the sense of striking the piano keys and of making up melodies and variations for fun. This ultimately developed into Gustavsen’s sense of variation both as an improviser and composer, but also as a musician who can be in dialogue with others in performance, a trait that is essential if a group aims to sound like a genuine musical unit.

One way this interaction manifests itself is in the flow of concert performances. When Gustavsen walks to the piano, he’s not sure

how he will start. Neither do his bandmates. He takes a moment for the idea to come and begins. The others listen and, when it’s time, join in. The first theme will lead to another and then another in little suites on a musical journey that is different each night.

He has said that the trio is a paradox between a pop jazz group devoted to melody, and a free jazz group interested in textures and soundscapes. It is how they navigate this duality that brings evenings of transcendent beauty. —*Michael Grolfsorean*



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

TORD GUSTAVSEN

Born in Oslo, the eldest of five children, Tord Gustavsen and his family moved to a village in rural Norway, where he grew up. Playing the piano from age four, he began composing and improvising before learning to read classical pieces. Soon he played gospel in churches, jazz fusion on other stages, and used his classical training to write his own songs. At age 19, he returned to Oslo to study sociology, psychology and the history of religions at the University of Oslo; and met singer Kristin Asbjørnsen, whose thoroughness and expressive powers have had a lasting effect on his artistic journey. In 1993, he was accepted to the Conservatory of Music in Trondheim, a place known to emphasize development of artistic identity. Having finished three years of training in jazz piano, jazz history, improvisational techniques, composition and analysis, he moved back to Oslo to pursue a career as a freelance musician and to commence a second wave of academic studies at the University of Oslo. Over the next three years he obtained a graduate degree in musicology, specializing in the psychology and phenomenology of improvisation.

In 2003, he released his first album with his trio on ECM Records, *Changing Places*, which captured the imagination of listeners worldwide and launched Gustavsen on an international career. Two more trio albums followed, *The Ground* (2005) and *Being There* (2007), to complete a trilogy that was met with critical acclaim and took the trio to leading events in Europe—the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Greece; in Asia—Japan, South Korea, Azerbaijan, Turkey; in North America—Canada and the U.S.; and Australia.

In 2008, the Vossajazz Festival in Norway commissioned a work that brought a new Gustavsen ensemble to the stage with singer Kristin Asbjørnsen, actress Cecilie Jørstad, saxophonist Tore Brunborg and bassist Mats Eilertsen. In 2009, this commissioned work was arranged for quintet and became Gustavsen's fourth album for ECM, *Restored, Returned*, and gave rise to his new touring quartet with Brunborg, Eilertsen, and drummer Jarle Vespestad, who has played on all of Gustavsen's ECM albums. The quartet went on to complete a second trilogy with the acclaimed albums

The Well (2012) and *Extended Circle* (2014), and added Portugal, Russia, Brazil, New Zealand, and South Africa to Gustavsen's touring history.

Inspired by his interest in Rumi, whose poems he had set to music, Gustavsen created a new trio in 2016 with vocalist Simin Tander and drummer Jarle Vespestad. They performed Norwegian hymns sung in Pashto and poems of Rumi in English for the album *What Was Said*.

In 2018, his artistic journey came full circle with the return to the piano trio and the release of *The Other Side*. Having the melody wholly in his hands once again, Gustavsen's growth as an artist is evident in the album's sound, paradoxically deeper and darker yet more open. To his sound palette he added the subtle use of electronics. His tenth album for ECM Records, *Seeing*, was again devoted to the piano trio and was released in 2024.

Before starting his solo career, Gustavsen had already been a vital part of the Norwegian jazz scene for some years. His playing was a cornerstone in projects that featured some of Norway's finest singers, including Solveig Slettahjell, Silje Nergaard, Siri Gjære, and Kristin Asbjørnsen.

Among those who have commissioned him to compose works are the Vossajazz Festival (Norway), Cheltenham Jazz Festival (UK), and the Oslo International Church Music Festival. His ongoing collaborators include singer Solveig Slettahjell with whom he has created new versions of Christmas hymns, singer Mahsa Vahdat with whom he has interpreted Persian repertoire, singer Simin Tander, and saxophonist Tore Brunborg. In 2017, he became cantor and jazz pianist for Tanum Church in Bærum, Norway. His awards include the Norwegian Grammy, the *Spellemannsprisen*, for the album *Restored, Returned*. The album *What Was Said* was awarded the *Jahrespreis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik* as one of the ten best albums in any genre in 2016 by music critics in Germany. In its 71st year of making awards, the Académie du Jazz of France selected Gustavsen for its 2024 *Prix du musicien européen* (European Musician Prize).

www.tordgustavsen.com

STEINAR RAKNES

A Norwegian bassist, vocalist and songwriter with his roots in jazz, Steinar Raknes has toured most corners of the world, collaborating

with musicians from many styles of music. Recognized for his work as composer and musician in the award-winning jazz trio Urban Connection, he has also collaborated with artists such as Chick Corea, Michael Brecker, Bobby McFerrin and Ola Kvernberg. After completing a Master of Arts at NTNU in 2001, he played in a large number of ensembles including The Core, Ola Kvernberg Trio, Skáidi, Kirsti Huke Quartet and the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra. Raknes is a double bass virtuoso, playing both pizzicato and arco and known for his big tone as well as his work with alternative pizzicato styles inspired by African Kora and American fingerpicking. He also extends the sound of the double bass and his voice by using guitar pedals and loopers. The name of Raknes's vocal project is STILLHOUSE, for which he has written songs and lyrics in an Americana style, mixing jazz, blues and more. He has also worked with Sami music – *yoik*, beginning with a collaboration with the great *yoiker* Inga Juuso. With her successor, Sara Marielle Gaup, he is now performing with the duo Arvvas.

JARLE VESPESTAD

Born in Kirkenes, Norway, Jarle Vespestad turned his attention to music in high school, graduating from Toneheim Folk High School and then taking up jazz studies at Trondheim Musikkonservatorium, where he became the driving force behind many successful bands to emerge from Trondheim. Among them was Vesletrekk, which became the band Supersilent, Farmers Market, and the Maria Kannegaard Trio. Vespestad joined the Tord Gustavsen Trio for its debut recording, *Changing Places*, released on ECM Records in 2003, and has remained Gustavsen's creative partner for the nine albums that followed, including the most recent, entitled *Seeing*. The kind of sublime minimalism, married to a distinct sense of groove, that Vespestad stands for has very few, if any, parallels in the world of drummers. His lyrical emphasis and the highly responsive interplay developed between Gustavsen and himself over the years are essential elements of the band's musical texture. If you hear someone singing when the band plays live, it's probably Vespestad.

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7:30 pm
Hodgson Concert Hall

Jordi Savall Hespèrion XXI La Capella Reial de Catalunya

Songs, Battles, and Dances from the Old and the New Worlds 1100-1780



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For three decades, the University of Georgia Performing Arts Center has been a cultural cornerstone for our campus and community—presenting extraordinary artists, fostering meaningful connections, and inspiring audiences of all ages. As we mark this milestone anniversary, we look ahead to the future of the performing arts at UGA. Support for our 30th Anniversary Fundraising Campaign will help advance critical facility upgrades and grow our Arts Impact Endowment, ensuring continued artistic excellence, access, and education for generations to come. Thank you for being part of our story—and our future.

Will you join us in honoring our past and investing in what's next?



Indigo Girls performed with the UGA Symphony Orchestra in Oct. 2023

Arts Impact Endowment

Launched in conjunction with the Performing Arts Center's 30th anniversary, this endowment helps sustain our arts-related education and engagement programming well into the future.



Facility Support Fund

This fund helps upgrade the technical systems and the physical facility in order to better accommodate current requirements of performing artists while also improving the audience experience.



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The Wall,
 oil on canvas

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by Christopher Hocking

Through July 2026

Christopher Hocking is an associate professor of painting and drawing at the Lamar Dodd School of Art, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in drawing and painting, fostering a collaborative learning environment. His painterly language explores a recombinant figural abstraction that engages form, space, and movement. Imagery draws from diverse sources: popular media, art history, science, toys, fashion, folk culture, children's books, fables, memory, and literature. Guided by sensation, intuition, and feeling, these images slip between abstraction and representation, triggering associations, contradictions, and multiple narrative possibilities.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES



BREABACH

Thursday, April 2, 7:30 pm
 Hodgson Concert Hall



“As polished as it was passionate, matching fiery intensity with exquisite finesse.”
 —*Scotsman*

Our favorite Glaswegians finally return! Securely ranked among Scotland's most skilled and imaginative contemporary folk acts, Breabach blends deep roots in highland and island tradition with the innovative musical ferment of their home base in Glasgow.

ÉBÈNE QUARTET

Fri, Apr 10, 7:30 pm
 Ramsey Concert Hall



“In line with the quartet's name, the performance evoked the characteristics of ebony: opaque and dense, much like the hardwood that gains depth and significance through polishing and appreciation of its intricate grain.”
 —*Bachtrack*

The group's first visit to UGA in 16 years promises to showcase the musicians at their very best, performing Ravel's brilliant string quartet alongside two of Beethoven's iconic works.

CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

Fri, Apr 17, 7:30 pm
 Hodgson Concert Hall



“There's an intellectual playfulness to everything that Cécile McLorin Salvant's velvety voice touches. It rises and falls with authority, striking highs that flutter and lows that grumble and roar.”
 —*Downbeat*

Singer and composer Cécile McLorin Salvant is one of the greatest vocalists of her generation and a true creative force. She won Grammy Awards for Best Jazz Vocal Album for three consecutive releases.

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Photo by Mark Mobley

Why I Give ...

Meet Malcolm and Priscilla Sumner. He is a retired UGA Regents' Professor of crop and soil sciences who did 20 years of international consulting. She is a former nurse and chair of the Athens Area Emergency Food Bank, where she volunteered for more than 30 years. They were at the PAC's opening gala performance by soprano Jessye Norman in 1996, and have now lived in Athens longer than in their native South Africa. This season they supported the November appearance by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO).

Malcolm Sumner: When we came here, this was a cultural desert. There was nothing here. We started supporting the music school. When the PAC started, we decided to contribute to it because we are both fans of classical music.

Priscilla Sumner: We are so lucky to have these artists come to Athens. For the size of this little town, it never ceases to amaze me. Yo-Yo Ma came to Athens! It's mind-boggling. And he's been here twice!

Malcolm: We love the ASO when they come to Athens. Oh, man. Sweet music! They love coming to Athens because of the acoustics.

Priscilla: The acoustics in the PAC are famous.

Malcolm: We've enjoyed every performance but maybe one or two in the period of 30 years. The quality has been excellent. The PAC is the best addition to Athens there's ever been, it's my humble opinion.



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Dance Me is "a feast for the eyes and a delight to listen" (*Huffington Post*). Created from the timeless music and words of the late Leonard Cohen, it was approved by the Montréal-based poet, artist, and songwriter. It features "Hallelujah," "Suzanne," "First We Take Manhattan," and "Everybody Knows."



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Guest artists, programs, dates, times, ticket prices, and service fees subject to change.

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Tickets purchased in advance and left for collection at "will call" will be available for pick up at the PAC Box Office during regular business hours or beginning one hour prior to the start of the performance, including off-site locations.

FEES

Georgia 8% sales tax and restoration fees (PAC events only) are included in all ticket prices. Additional service fees for online or phone orders and ticket delivery apply.

PARKING

Through an arrangement with UGA Parking Services, complimentary parking for all UGA Presents performances is available in both the PAC surface lot and the PAC parking deck. For performances at the Fine Arts Theatre, please use the Hull Street Deck, the Tate Center Parking Deck (payment required), or other UGA surface lots in the area. For questions regarding parking, please call UGA Parking Services at (706) 542-7275. For information about parking at The Classic Center, please visit classiccenter.com.

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Unless noted otherwise, photography, video, and/or audio recording of any kind are strictly prohibited during all performances.

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Please silence all mobile phones and other noisemaking devices. Texting during performances is prohibited.

LATE SEATING

Late seating is subject to the discretion of the house manager. Late patrons may be reseated in an alternate location.

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Children ages 6 and older are welcome to attend all performances, unless indicated otherwise for specific events. Children under age 6 and babies will not be admitted. Parents and guardians are encouraged to exercise judgement when determining if programs are appropriate for their children. Please contact the box office at (706) 542-4400 with questions about specific performances.

ACCESSIBILITY

Venues are accessible to people using wheelchairs or with restricted mobility. Please contact the box office to make advance arrangements if you require special assistance. Accessible parking spaces are located near the entrance to the PAC lobby.

LARGE-PRINT PROGRAMS

Large-print programs are available by calling the box office at least 72 hours before the performance.

ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

For individuals requiring hearing assistance, the Performing Arts Center offers Assistive Listening Devices that may be checked out at no cost to patrons with a photo ID at the coat check desk in the Performing Arts Center lobby. The photo ID will be returned in exchange for the device at the conclusion of the performance.

FOOD AND DRINK

Concessions are available for purchase in the PAC lobby for all UGA Presents performances and other selected events. Food and drink are prohibited inside the performance venues. Complimentary cough lozenges are available at the coat check desk. Please do not unwrap lozenges during performances.

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We appreciate the dedicated service of the many community volunteers who serve at the Performing Arts Center. To inquire about joining our team, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (706) 542-2634. Training sessions are held each August.

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Hodgson Concert Hall and Ramsey Concert Hall are available for rental. For information please call (706) 542-2290 or visit the rental page at pac.uga.edu/rentals. Rental inquiries for the Fine Arts Theatre should be directed to the UGA Dept. of Theatre and Film Studies.

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