

BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET

BELONGING TOUR

SAXOPHONES Branford Marsalis

BASS Eric Revis

PIANO Joey Calderazzo

DRUMS Justin Faulkner

Zellerbach Theatre

Sunday, September 28 @ 7 PM

There will be no intermission.

PROGRAM NOTES

Branford Marsalis released his Blue Note Records debut *Belonging* in March 2025, a full album interpretation of Keith Jarrett's 1974 ECM album of the same name which introduced the pianist's European Quartet. *Belonging* is Marsalis' first new release since 2019 with his acclaimed and longstanding quartet.

Marsalis admits that he was into other music when *Belonging* was released in 1974. "I was a freshman in high school, listening to R&B," he recalls. "I didn't know *Belonging* existed." That changed once he shifted his focus to jazz. He was initially only familiar with Jarrett's solo piano music until Kenny Kirkland introduced him to the European Quartet with saxophonist Jan Garbarek, bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen. "We were sitting on a plane sometime in the eighties and Kenny put his headphones on my ears and played [Jarrett's 1979 album] 'My Song.' When he tried to take the headphones back after five minutes I slapped his hand away; and when we got to the next city, I went out and bought every recording by that band."

A similar discovery occurred when Marsalis decided to include "The Windup" from *Belonging* on 2019's *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*. "We were all listening to 'The Windup' for the last record, and Revis said that we should just record *Belonging*; the whole album is so great, and we could do things with it. We all liked the idea, and then the pandemic came. When the pandemic ended, we all still felt that yeah, we should do this."

The quartet applied Marsalis' previous approach to classics by Charles Mingus, the Modern Jazz Quartet, John Coltrane and others – neither slavish fealty to the originals nor extreme deconstructions. "On the composition 'Belonging,' I clearly played things that Jan played on the record," Marsalis points out. "I didn't try to reject the idea when it occurred, but at no point did we plan to consciously pay tribute. I'm always listening to the whole record, not just the saxophone solos, and the most impressive thing about *Belonging* for me is how it all fits together."

Unlike Jarrett's band, which convened for the first time when it recorded *Belonging* and would only later become one of the signature groups of the 1970s, the Marsalis Quartet can call upon a rare history as a group. Revis joined in 1996, Calderazzo in 1999 and Faulkner in 2009, and their ability to hear and react to each other is unparalleled. Of equal importance to Marsalis is the lessons that time has imparted. "The biggest benefit we have is 50 years of information that Keith's band didn't have and our ability to process that shared experience."

Marsalis notes that "The whole purpose of this group is to be more like a chamber group than a jazz group," and in the process, he has taken listeners along without compromising his approach. "All that any audience for any music wants is a great melody and a great accompanying beat" he explains. "It doesn't really matter where our journey goes, as long as we keep the dance going."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

New Orleans-born **Branford Marsalis** is an award-winning saxophonist, band leader, featured classical soloist and a composer for film and Broadway. In the process, he has received three Grammy® Awards, a citation by the National Endowment for the Arts as a Jazz Master and an avatar of contemporary artistic excellence.

The Branford Marsalis Quartet, formed in 1986, remains his primary means of expression. In its virtually uninterrupted three-plus decades of existence, the Quartet has established a rare breadth of stylistic range and has long been recognized as the standard to which other ensembles of its kind must be measured. But Marsalis has not confined his music to the jazz quartet context. He recently composed a classical suite commissioned by the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra. A frequent soloist with classical ensembles, Marsalis has become increasingly sought after as a featured soloist with acclaimed orchestras around the world, including the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, and the Chicago, Detroit, North Carolina and Düsseldorf Symphonies. And his legendary guest performances with the Grateful Dead and collaborations with Sting have made him a fan favorite in the pop arena.

Marsalis' screen credits as a composer include original music for *Rustin* starring Colman Domingo; the History Channel documentary *Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre*; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* starring Viola Davis and the late Chadwick Boseman; *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* starring Oprah Winfrey; and Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*. He received a 2021 Emmy nomination for the original music he composed and produced for *Tulsa Burning* in the Outstanding Music Composition for a Documentary Series or Special (Original Dramatic Score) category. His work on Broadway has garnered a Drama Desk Award and a Tony nomination for the acclaimed revival of *Fences*. He recently arranged and orchestrated the music for a new Broadway production about Louis Armstrong, *A Wonderful World*. His previous Broadway credits include music for the revivals of *Children of a Lesser God* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, as well as *The Mountaintop*, which starred Angela Basset and Samuel L. Jackson.