



# **SULLIVAN FORTNER**

Thursday, December 17 @ 7 PM

Selections to be announced from the stage.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

For the past decade, Sullivan Fortner has been stretching deep-rooted talents as a pianist, composer, band leader and uncompromising individualist. The Grammy® Award-winning artist received international praise as both key player and producer for his collaborative work on *The Window* (Mack Avenue Records, 2018) alongside multi-Grammy® Award-winner, vocalist-composer Cécile McLorin Salvant. As a solo leader, he has released *Moments Preserved* (Decca Records, 2018) and *Aria* (Impulse! Records, 2015) to critical acclaim, and he's only getting started. This past year, Fortner earned recognition in multiple *DownBeat* Critics' Poll categories, winning first place in Rising Star Piano and Rising Star Jazz Artist.

In addition to associations with diverse voices such as Wynton Marsalis, Paul Simon, Diane Reeves, Etienne Charles and John Scofield, Fortner's frequent and longtime collaborators have included Ambrose Akinmusire, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Stefon Harris, Kassa Overall, Tivon Pennicott, Pete Bernstein, Nicholas Payton, Billy Hart, Gary Bartz, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Fred Hersch and Roy Hargrove. The highly sought-after improviser has performed across the country and throughout the world at cultural institutions such as Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazz Standard, Smalls Jazz Club and New Orleans clubs as well as celebrated festivals including Newport, Monterey, Discover, Tri-C JazzFest and Gilmore Keyboard, among others. In 2019, Fortner brought his band to the historic Village Vanguard for a week-long engagement as a leader. His notable studio contributions include work on Etienne Charles' *Kaiso* (Culture Shock, 2011), Donald Harrison's *Quantum Leap* (FOMP Records, 2010) and Theo Croker's *The Fundamentals* (Left Sided Music, 2007).

Playing solo or leading an orchestra, Fortner engages harmony and rhythmic ideas through curiosity and clarity. Within phrases, he finds universes, and listeners often hear how he's moved by his exploration of each note. Coming up in New Orleans, Fortner began playing piano at age seven, following a storied lineage of improvisers and masters of time and every iteration of the blues. He earned his bachelor's degree from the Oberlin Conservatory and his master's in jazz performance from Manhattan School of

Music (MSM). A champion of mentorship, Fortner has offered masterclasses at MSM, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, Purdue University, Lafayette Summer Music Jazz Workshop, Belmont University and Oberlin Conservatory where he has held a faculty position.

Pulling distinct elements from different eras, Fortner's artistry preserves the tradition and evolves the sound. He seeks connections among different musical styles that are deeply soulful and wildly inventive. Both his works and his insights have been featured in culturally iconic publications, from *The New York Times* to *The Root*. Accolades include the 2015 Cole Porter Fellowship by the American Pianists Association, a Leonore Annenberg Arts Fellowship and the 2016 Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists.

"His fundamentals as a player could hardly be stronger, and his instincts as a composer and bandleader are almost startlingly mature." -*The New York Times*

"Fortner's ability to simultaneously project his own voice and reflect those of others reveals an empathy..." -*DownBeat*

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