

EASTMAN PRESENTS

säje

Saturday, April 6, 2024

Kilbourn Hall

7:30 PM



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

PROGRAM

Selections will be announced from the stage. All songs performed are arranged by the women of säje, and most can be found on their GRAMMY Award-winning debut album recording.

Assisted by:
Dawn Clement, piano
Michael Glynn, bass
Christian Euman, drums

MEET THE ARTISTS

The GRAMMY Award® winning vocal supergroup, **säje** (rhymes with “beige”), is the brainchild of vocalist/composers Sara Gazarek, Amanda Taylor, Johnaye Kendrick, and Erin Bentlage. Born out of close friendship and deep admiration, these world-renowned artists, composers, and arrangers have come together to explore, create, and celebrate the music that moves them. As individuals, each artist has crafted



their own notable solo career, and now are delighted to bring their collective voices to this union, traversing a vast array of compelling original material, beloved jazz standards, and contemporary re-imaginings (The Bad Plus, YEBBA, Björk, etc). During quarantine, säje received their first GRAMMY Award® nomination, for their first composition “Desert Song” in the Best Arrangement Instruments and Vocals category. Later that year, they were awarded the John Lennon Songwriting Contest Grand Prize Award for their second composition “Wisteria”, as well as their first Jazz Journalists Association Award Nomination for “Best Vocal Jazz Group”. The collective also recently received gracious support for their continued work through the Chamber Music of America New Jazz Works grant, the Super Patron Grant, the Jazz Road Creative Residencies grant, and the USC Visions + Voices grant.

Their highly anticipated debut album was released in August of 2023, featuring new original work and compelling covers, highlighting collaborations with artists Jacob Collier, Terri Lyne Carrington, Ambrose Akinmusire, and more. The album was received to critical acclaim, and wide reception, landing a #2 spot on the Billboard Contemporary Jazz Chart, and peaking at #4 on the iTunes Jazz Chart, along with a sold-out tour across the USA and Japan, and a GRAMMY Award® win for their arrangement of “In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning” (featuring Jacob Collier). The union of säje is rooted in the tradition of joy, curiosity, lush harmony, heart-felt expression, and profound sisterhood.

MEET THE ARTISTS

Born and raised in Seattle, WA, GRAMMY Award® winning jazz vocalist **Sara Gazarek** reigns as one of the most creative voices of her generation, and one “who may well turn out to be the next important jazz singer” (Los Angeles Times). Collaborating with jazz legends Fred Hersch, Billy Childs, Kurt Elling, and more, and with 6 critically-acclaimed albums under her belt at the age of 40, Gazarek often tours internationally as



a soloist/band leader, and as a co-founder of the vocal collective, säje, whose debut album earned a GRAMMY Award® for Best Arrangement Instruments and Vocals. Sara is a 2023 Chamber Music of America New Jazz Works grant recipient, serves on the LA Chapter Board of Governors for the Recording Academy, and works as an Associate Professor of Jazz Voice at the Eastman School of Music (University of Rochester) where she is currently designing and leading their new jazz voice degree. Sara’s full length nonet project, an expansion of her critically celebrated EP *Vanity*, is set to release in Fall of 2024.

Amanda Taylor is a two-time GRAMMY Award® nominated arranger specializing in music for vocal ensembles. Pentatonix founder & producer Ben Bram says, “Amanda’s arrangements are absolutely stunning. She has the magical ability to create works that are so dazzling and complex, yet still satisfyingly singable, tasteful, and accessible to all listeners.” A Seattle native, Taylor was immersed in the



musical culture of the city from a very young age, and flourished in some of its most prestigious ensembles; Seattle Youth Symphony, Vocalpoint! Seattle, and the Seattle Girls’ Choir among them. Through these experiences, Taylor developed an unbridled curiosity for harmony & composition. She spent her childhood transcribing, multi-tracking her favorite choral pieces, and exploring her own original music. At 16, she auditioned for and was accepted into the GRAMMY® Jazz Ensembles, alongside explosive talents like Kate Davis, Jazzmeia Horn, and Michael

MEET THE ARTISTS

Mayo. With this ensemble, Taylor performed at events such as the Blue Note Records party, the MusiCares Person of the Year tribute, and the GRAMMY® Celebration After Party, sharing the stage with artists like Cassandra Wilson, Terence Blanchard, and Herbie Hancock. Taylor then signed on with powerhouse jazz ensemble Groove for Thought as their lead soprano. She quickly began learning to write for contemporary a cappella & vocal jazz, making her arranger's debut with Groove for Thought on NBC's "The Sing-Off" (Season 2, 2010). Ever since, Taylor has traveled the U.S. to teach, write, and learn. She has recently founded vocal arranging company Wicked Pigeon, and continues to work with A Cappella Academy, a teen intensive designed to train up-and-coming vocal talents. Her previous faculty positions include Mount Si High School, Bellevue College, Northwest College, & the University of Southern California. Taylor is a frequent guest conductor and adjudicator at various vocal festivals & conferences, and continues to arrange for both scholastic and professional vocal ensembles (The Manhattan Transfer, Chanticleer, Kings Return). She is an active composer, arranger & studio singer (World of Warcraft, Diablo III, Destiny, Shadow of Mordor, DOTA, and more).

GRAMMY® nominated vocalist, **Johnaye Kendrick** received Master of Music from Loyola University and an Artist Diploma from the prestigious Herbie Hancock Institute. Johnaye performs her original compositions as well as fresh interpretations of beloved jazz and contemporary works. She focuses on graceful renditions of jazz standards and composes music and lyrics where she often accompanies herself on harmonium, violin, viola and percussion. The late Jimmy Heath said "Johnaye is a complete musician with a beautiful instrument and open ears." In 2014, she founded her johnygirl record label. On this label she recorded, produced and released two albums: HERE, a collection of heartfelt originals and FLYING which was nominated for the Earshot Jazz NW Recording of the Year. Johnaye is a recipient of the Chamber Music America New Jazz Works Grant, the South Arts Jazz Road Creative Residency, the Chamber Music America



MEET THE ARTISTS

Performance Plus Grant, the Marble House Residency, the Artist Trust Fellowship and has been voted Earshot Jazz NW Vocalist of the Year. Johnaye serves as Professor of Music at the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. In addition to her many musical endeavors, Johnaye is a Certified Sound Therapy Practitioner and Energy Healer with a blossoming practice, *johnygirl sound therapy & healing arts studio*, a leading Sound Therapy studio in the Pacific Northwest.

Hailing from the green mountains of Vermont, **Erin Bentlage** is a GRAMMY® nominated artist who writes, sings, and plays music in search of honest sound. Raised in a small town near the city of Burlington, she first developed her love for musical expression through ballet and classical piano lessons, and later found her creative home in the contemporary realm through jazz and improvisation as both



performer and composer. As an artist, Erin has been featured on a growing number of projects including collaborations with Jacob Collier (säje, Djesse Vol. 3), Kiefer (When There's Love Around), Amber Navran (Golden Light), and Kate McGarry (What To Wear In The Dark). As a writer, Erin has been recipient of the Los Angeles Jazz Society's 'New Note', for which she was commissioned to create a twenty-minute original work, and has also written for a growing number of world-renowned ensembles including Tonality, Kings Return and The Apartment Sessions. She can be heard lending her sound as a vocalist on a wide variety of projects, from major motion picture film scores to singing (and often writing) background vocals for artists such as Moonchild, Pomplamoose, and more. Erin is currently on faculty at the California State University, Northridge and can be found performing around the globe with Jacob Collier's Djesse World Tour band and, of course, säje.

UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at EastmanTheatre.org

EASTMAN RANLET SERIES

Takács Quartet

Kilbourn Hall

Sunday, April 14, 2024 at 3:00 PM

In a highly anticipated return to Eastman's Ranlet Series, the Grammy Award-winning Takács Quartet present a program of 'the natural world', featuring Hadyn's "Sunrise" Quartet, Beethoven's 8th string quartet, inspired while contemplating the starry skies and the music of the spheres, and a new work by Phoenix-based composer, Nokuthula Ngwenyama.

BARBARA B. SMITH WORLD MUSIC SERIES

Oumou Sangaré

Kilbourn Hall

Friday, April 19, 2024 at 7:30 PM

Global superstar, Oumou Sangaré, fuses her distinctive Malian sound and voice with elements of blues, folk and rock resulting in a timeless body of work free from borders and genres. Sangaré's vocals soar above driving grooves and inescapably danceable rhythms for a show that is sure to have you on your feet!

UPCOMING STUDENT ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

Eastman Saxophone Project

Kilbourn Hall

Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 7:30 PM

Eastman Jazz Ensemble

Kilbourn Hall

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 7:30 PM

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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