

EnsembleArts Philly

A non-profit organization serving the region through world-class performances at the Kimmel Center, Academy of Music, and Miller Theater

Share it on Facebook and Instagram!

🎵🎷 Let the rhythm take over and the good vibes flow! @EnsembleArtsPhilly presents a dynamic lineup of acclaimed artists and genre-bending ensembles as part of the NEW 2026-2027 Jazz Season. From @GregoryPorterMusic to @PinkMartini and more, experience the full spectrum of jazz LIVE in Philly. For more info, visit www.ensembleartsphilly.org.

Press Contacts:

Lauren A. Woodard Hall
484-832-1963
lhall@ensembleartsphilly.org

Taylor Kowalski
267-765-3723
tkowalski@alliedglobalmarketing.com

ENSEMBLE ARTS PHILLY UNVEILS THE NEW 2026-2027 JAZZ SERIES, PRESENTING GLOBALLY ACCLAIMED, GRAMMY® AWARD-WINNING ARTISTS AND GENRE-BLENDING ENSEMBLES INCLUDING GREGORY PORTER, PINK MARTINI, DJANGO FESTIVAL ALLSTARS, YASMIN WILLIAMS, LAKECIA BENJAMIN, AND MORE!

PACKAGES ON SALE TODAY!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Philadelphia, PA, May 12, 2026) – Ensemble Arts Philly announces its NEW 2026–2027 Jazz Season, a bold, high-caliber lineup that brings together jazz legends, breakout artists, and boundary-pushing ensembles shaping the sound of today. From soulful vocals to high-energy bands and globally inspired sounds, the series reflects both the richness and ongoing evolution of jazz today. Spanning tradition and innovation, the season offers a compelling experience for longtime fans and those discovering jazz for the first time.

“Jazz has always been about connection, between artists, audiences, and cultures, and that spirit is central to Ensemble Arts Philly’s work,” said Ryan Fleur, President and CEO. “This series reflects both the richness of the tradition and the creativity shaping its future, a commitment we extend beyond the stage through education initiatives like *Jazz for Freedom* and training programs such as the All City Jazz Fellowship that help cultivate the next generation of jazz artists and listeners.”

The season includes performances across the Kimmel Center's multiple spaces and the Miller Theater, kicking off on October 7, 2026, with Hollywood's own **Jeff Goldblum and The Mildred Snitzer Orchestra**, followed by six-time GRAMMY Award nominee, dynamic saxophonist, and composer **Lakecia Benjamin** on October 22, 2026. Next, GRAMMY Award-winning **8-Bit Big Band** takes the stage on October 24, 2026, delivering a crowd-pleasing, high-energy mashup of jazz and video game music, followed by renowned Cuban orchestra **Afro-Cuban All Stars led by Juan de Marcos González** on October 30, 2026. On November 14, 2026, the acclaimed quartet **The Bad Plus** returns on its final tour, closing out a 26-year run as one of jazz's most influential genre-defying groups.

The series continues with the globally beloved **Pink Martini**; known for its lush, sophisticated blend of jazz, classical, and international influences, the December 14, 2026, show – **Pink Martini All Stars presents A Season of Stars** – will feature Ari Shapiro, Edna Vazquez, and Jimmie Herrod. In the new year, acclaimed pianist and composer **Sullivan Fortner** leads his trio and showcases his inventive, expressive approach to modern jazz on February 13, 2027. Two-time GRAMMY Award-winning vocalist **Gregory Porter** brings his warm baritone and deeply expressive storytelling on February 15, 2027, followed by outstanding trumpeter and composer **Ambrose Akinmusire** on February 25, 2027. Innovative guitarist and composer **Yasmin Williams**, known for her expansive, genre-blurring style and inventive use of instruments ranging from fingerstyle guitar to kora and harp guitar, joins the lineup with the **Dream Quartet** on April 3, 2027. The season concludes on May 14, 2027, with the **Django Festival Allstars**, delivering an exuberant celebration of Django Reinhardt's timeless swing.

###

Tickets

2026-2027 Jazz Series Packages are on sale now. Save 10% by purchasing a 2-show package online at www.ensembleartsp Philly.org, by calling 215-893-1999, or in person at the Academy of Music Box Office (240 S. Broad Street) daily from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. For more information, visit www.ensembleartsp Philly.org.

Single tickets will go on sale to the public on a later date.

###

A complete list of the 2026-2027 Jazz Series programming can be found below:

JEFF GOLDBLUM AND THE MILDRED SNITZER ORCHESTRA

Miller Theater

Wednesday, October 7, 2026 | 8:00 p.m.

Recently co-starring as The Wizard of Oz with Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo in the critically acclaimed global box office smash, *Wicked* and *Wicked: For Good*, Jeff Goldblum's storied career now spans nearly six decades of award-winning works as a starring actor in film, television and theater.

Goldblum launched the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra 30 years ago. Since then, he and his band have performed for delighted audiences throughout the United States and all over the world playing contemporary arrangements of classic jazz and American Songbook standards.

The group has released four albums, all with Decca Records, that have featured brilliant guest artists including Gregory Porter, Kelly Clarkson, Miley Cyrus, Fiona Apple, Freda Payne, Haley Reinhart, Imelda May, Maiya Sykes and more. Their most recent album, *Still Blooming*, debuted at #1 on the Official Jazz & Blues Albums Chart and #10 on the UK Official Albums Chart in 2025. Upcoming, Goldblum and The Midred Snitzer Orchestra will present *Night Blooms*, the companion album to *Still Blooming*, on June 5, 2026 under Universal's recently relaunched Fontana label. Featured guests on the album include: Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo, Charlie Puth, dodie, Scarlett Johansson, and Melody Gardot.

LAKECIA BENJAMIN

Perelman Theater inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

Thursday, October 22, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.

Lakecia Benjamin is a six-time GRAMMY nominated New York-based saxophonist, arranger, composer, and educator. Her music offers a unique meld of R&B, several strains of jazz, and funk. Her warm, resonant tone – that has been compared to Johnny Hodges – lends itself to any form of music she chooses to play. In addition to honing her chops early with Clark Terry and later Terri Lyne Carrington, she is also a noted accompanist for vocalists – among them Gregory Porter and Theo Crocker. *Retox*, her 2012 leader debut, offered a beat-conscious set of soul and funk covers and originals produced by Ben Kane. Benjamin played on “Right on Brotha,” the closing track from Robert Glasper’s *Everything’s Beautiful* in 2018, a collection of reimagined Miles Davis tracks. Her sophomore date, *Rise Up for Ropeadope*, contained a Prince-inspired series of original jazz-funk jams. In 2020, she released *Pursuance: The Coltranes*. The widely acclaimed set contained six tunes each by Alice and John Coltrane, with Benjamin leading a large cast that included former Coltrane sideman Reggie Workman. In 2023, she returned with the star-studded *Phoenix*. Produced by Carrington, it wed jazz, funky soul, R&B, and hip-hop with an all-star cast. The album brought upon three GRAMMY nominations and universal praise.

THE 8-BIT BIG BAND

Miller Theater

Saturday, October 24, 2026 | 8:00 p.m.

The 8-Bit Big Band is a multi-GRAMMY Award-winning symphonic jazz orchestra dedicated to reimagining the most beloved music from video games. Under the direction of bandleader Charlie Rosen, the ensemble blends the power of a full big band with the nostalgia and emotional depth of iconic gaming soundtracks.

Since its formation in 2017, the band has built a global following through viral performances, acclaimed albums, and sold-out concerts across the United States. With Grammy wins in 2022 and 2026, The 8-Bit Big Band has become a leading force in bringing video game music into the concert hall.

Their performances feature music from legendary franchises, transformed through rich orchestration, virtuosic solos, and a contemporary jazz sensibility. The result is a dynamic and immersive live experience that appeals to both dedicated gamers and music lovers alike.

JUAN DE MARCOS & THE AFRO-CUBAN ALL STARS

Miller Theater

Friday, October 30, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.

The Afro-Cuban All Stars are a renowned Cuban orchestra led by Juan de Marcos González, dedicated to promoting the full spectrum of Cuban music, from son montuno to timba. Famously central to the 1997 Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon, they blend traditional 1950s styles with contemporary sounds, featuring multi-generational, top-tier Cuban musicians.

THE BAD PLUS FAREWELL TOUR

Perelman Theater inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

Saturday, November 14, 2026 | 7:00 p.m.

The Bad Plus are the ultimate originals. A democratic unit with a clear vision and a refusal to conform to convention. For the past two decades they have played with spirit and adventure, made their own rules and done so with a bold sense of creativity and intent. Avoiding easy categorization, The Bad Plus has won critical acclaim and a legion of fans worldwide with their unique sound and flair for live performance.

The Bad Plus continues to push boundaries as founding members Reid Anderson (bass) and Dave King (drums) embark on a new piano-less incarnation of the band with Ben Monder (guitar) and Chris Speed (tenor saxophone) – instigating a new wave of excitement and anticipation within the band that is re-energizing their sound and inspiration. The Bad Plus have constantly searched to bridge genres and techniques while exploring the infinite possibilities of exceptional musicians working in perfect sync.

PINK MARTINI ALL STARS PRESENTS A SEASON OF STARS

Marian Anderson Hall inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

Monday, December 14, 2026 | 7:00 p.m.

Thomas Lauderdale's globe-trotting "little orchestra," Pink Martini returns with a fresh holiday celebration full of joy, nostalgia, and global flair. Joined by a rotating lineup of the band's beloved singers and long-time collaborators, this festive program blends timeless holiday favorites with unexpected musical gems, all wrapped in Pink Martini's signature swirl of classic pop, big band richness, and cinematic sparkle. With their unmistakable style and world-traveling spirit, Pink Martini invites audiences on a warm and glittering holiday journey perfect for the season.

SULLIVAN FORTNER TRIO

Perelman Theater inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

Saturday, February 13, 2027 | 7:30 p.m.

For more than a decade, Sullivan Fortner has been stretching deep-rooted talents as a pianist, composer, band leader, and uncompromising individualist. The GRAMMY Award-winning artist and recipient of the 2026 Larry J. Bell Jazz Artist Award has garnered international praise as a leader and a fierce collaborator. He earned the 2025 Grammy Award for Best Jazz Performance on Samara Joy's "Twinkle Twinkle Little Me" and the 2019 GRAMMY Award for Best Jazz Vocal Album alongside Cécile McLorin Salvant for her acclaimed album *The Window*, on which he

serves as both key player and producer. Fortner also has earned GRAMMY nods for his 2023 release *Solo Game* and his provocative arrangement of “Optimistic Voices/No Love Dying” from Salvant’s 2022 release *Ghost Song*.

GREGORY PORTER

Marian Anderson Hall inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
Monday, February 15, 2027 | 7:00 p.m.

Acclaimed singer-songwriter Gregory Porter was raised in Bakersfield, California, and cites the Bakersfield Southern Gospel sound, as well as his mother’s Nat King Cole record collection, as fundamental influences on his own sound. Porter began singing in jazz clubs in San Diego while attending San Diego State University on a football scholarship. Eventually, Porter moved to New York City to pursue music full-time, and his career began to ascend with the release of his first two albums – *Water* (2010) and *Be Goo’* (2012) – both of which received GRAMMY nominations.

In 2013, he released his breakout Blue Note debut *Liquid Spirit*, which grew into a global phenomenon, selling more than a million albums and earning Porter his first GRAMMY Award, with *NPR* declaring him “America’s Next Great Jazz Singer.” His 2016 follow-up *Take Me To The Alley* won Porter his second GRAMMY Award and firmly established him as his generation’s most soulful jazz artist. In 2017, Porter released the heartfelt tribute album *Nat King Cole & Me* and in 2020 returned to his original songwriting on the uplifting *ALL RISE*; both of which received GRAMMY nominations. His 2021 release *Still Rising* collected new songs, covers, duets, and a selection of his most-loved hits. In 2023, Porter released his first-ever holiday album *Christmas Wish*.

Porter has become one of the most successful jazz vocalists of his generation. He recently received the 2025 Edison Jazz Lifetime Achievement Award. With a voice that has been described as “liquid gold,” Gregory Porter has captivated audiences around the world with his soulful baritone and deeply emotional performances. His unique blend of jazz, soul, and gospel has earned him critical acclaim and huge global success.

AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE

Perelman Theater inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
Thursday, February 25, 2027 | 7:30 p.m.

Outstanding trumpeter and composer Ambrose Akinmusire is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, the University of Southern California, and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. In 2007, he won two of the most prestigious awards in the jazz world: the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition and the Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Solo Competition. He made his Blue Note debut with *When the Heart Emerges Glistening* (2011). His subsequent albums – including *The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier to Paint*, *Origami Harvest* (named Best Jazz of 2018 by *The New York Times*), and the GRAMMY nominated *On the Tender Spot of Every Calloused Moment* – have firmly established his position as one of the most original artists of his generation. A recipient of the Paul Acket Award (North Sea Jazz Festival) and a multiple winner of the *DownBeat* Critics Poll, he received a Grammy nomination in 2026 for *Honey from a Winter Stone* in the category Best Alternative Jazz Album.

YASMIN WILLIAMS WITH THE DREAM QUARTET

Perelman Theater inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
Saturday, April 3, 2027 | 7:30 p.m.

Yasmin Williams is an innovative guitarist and composer known for her unique compositional approach and expansive instrumental style. Her latest album *Acadia*, released on Nonesuch Records, showcases her evolution from solo performer to collaborative artist, featuring partnerships with notable musicians like Aoife O'Donovan and Immanuel Wilkins, a former Ensemble Arts Philly Jazz Residency Artist and education student.

Williams' distinctive creative process involves "ruminating" on single notes until compositions naturally emerge. Beyond traditional fingerpicked guitar, she demonstrates mastery of multiple instruments including kora, harp guitar, banjo, and electric guitar. Her music, while rooted in folk traditions, transcends conventional structures to incorporate elements of progressive rock and experimental composition. Following her acclaimed 2021 album *Urban Driftwood*, *Acadia* represents a significant artistic expansion, featuring three distinct sections that move from traditional folk influences to atmospheric soundscapes and experimental arrangements. Williams' approach emphasizes sustained tones and intricate articulation, creating music that balances technical precision with ethereal, floating melodies.

DJANGO FESTIVAL ALLSTARS

Perelman Theater inside the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
Friday, May 14, 2027 | 7:30 p.m.

Django's unmistakable cool and jumpin' jole de vivre have made him an icon for an unlikely range of luminaries from Carlos Santana to Eric Clapton, both guitar greats. Jimi Hendrix named his "big band of gypsies" in tribute, and Willie Nelson adopted his influence in "country-swing." The Django Festival All Stars have grown into a brilliantly cohesive group of star musicians who've taken America by storm, performing at top concert halls and festivals to standing ovations.

The music speaks of Paris in the 20s and 30s when "gitane" music filled the air, in the cafés, the streets, in the countryside, a romantic Paris with lovers, campfires, a time of Montmartre, la belle époque, le Boudon café, café au lait, luscious pastry, and a great glass of wine. Django was "king". He teamed with Jazz Violinist Stephane Grappelli and made musical history. The Django Festival Allstars bring this music to 'today', combining known standards and original music. They swing like crazy and will break your heart with a ballad.

###

ABOUT ENSEMBLE ARTS PHILLY

For more information about ENSEMBLE ARTS PHILLY, visit www.ensembleartsphilly.org.

###

For photography, please visit www.ensembleartsphilly.smugmug.com.