

Saturday, April 23, 2011, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Kurt Elling



*Dedicated to You: Kurt Elling Sings the
Music of Coltrane and Hartman*

featuring Ernie Watts & Laurence Hobgood

Kurt Elling	<i>vocals</i>
Ernie Watts	<i>saxophone</i>
Laurence Hobgood	<i>piano</i>
John McLean	<i>guitar</i>
Harish Raghavan	<i>bass</i>
Ulysses Owens Jr.	<i>drums</i>

This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Wendy and Mason Willrich.

Cal Performances' 2010–2011 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

KURT ELLING is among the world's foremost jazz vocalists. He has been named "Male Singer of the Year" by the Jazz Journalists Association half a dozen times over the past ten years, and during the same period has been the perennial winner of the *Down Beat* Critics Poll. He is also a Grammy Award-winner, and every record he released has been Grammy-nominated.

Mr. Elling's rich baritone spans four octaves and features both technical mastery and emotional depth. His command of rhythm, texture, phrasing and dynamics is more like a virtuoso instrumentalist's than a singer's. His repertoire includes original compositions and standards, all of which serving as springboards for improvisation, scatting, spoken word and poetry.

Mr. Elling is a renowned artist of vocalese—the writing and performing of words over recorded improvised jazz solos. The natural heir to jazz pioneers Eddie Jefferson, King Pleasure and Jon Hendricks, Mr. Elling has set his own lyrics to the solos of Wayne Shorter, Keith Jarrett and Pat Metheny. He often incorporates images and references from writers such as Rilke, Rumi, Neruda and Proust into his work. The late poet and Bollingen Prize-winner Robert Creeley wrote, "Kurt Elling takes us into a world of sacred particulars. His words are informed by a powerful poetic spirit."

Mr. Elling has been featured in profiles for *CBS Sunday Morning*, CNN, on Ramsey Lewis's *Legends of Jazz*, and in hundreds of publications.

In 2010, Mr. Elling completed an extensive tour with the Monterey Jazz Festival All-Stars and staged *Passion World*, a commissioned event for Jazz at Lincoln Center with French accordion virtuoso Richard Galliano, singing songs of love and loss in four languages.

In 1998, Mr. Elling undertook a critical, multidimensional exploration of the life and work of Beat poet Allen Ginsberg at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre. The show was also mounted at the Kennedy Center, Philadelphia's Annenberg Center and Ireland's Galway Festival. A year later, Mr. Elling was commissioned to create an event fusing jazz and modern dance, featuring his wife, dancer Jennifer Elling. As a result, the City of Chicago commissioned Mr. Elling to write, direct,

perform in and host a major event for its millennial celebration. Mr. Elling's production, *This Is Our Music, These Are Our People*, featured blues great Buddy Guy, author and historian Studs Terkel, word jazz artist Ken Nordine, Von Freeman, poet Gwendolyn Brooks, members of the Joffrey Ballet, Ed Paschke's and Tony Fitzpatrick's visual art, and a 90-voice gospel choir.

In 2001, Mr. Elling created *LA/CHI/NY* for the Steppenwolf Theatre. For this work, he invited one poet and one musician from each of America's three great cities to bring the sounds of their environments to the stage. The following year, Mr. Elling produced the vocal summit *Four Brothers*, which featured Mr. Elling, Mark Murphy, Kevin Mahogany and Jon Hendricks, at Chicago's Park West Theater. A cross-generational tribute to the art of singing jazz, *Four Brothers* toured Europe and the United States in 2003–2004 to much acclaim. A final performance in summer 2005 occurred in Chicago's Millennium Park—a concert which added Sheila Jordan in the fourth spot and was aptly named *Three Brotha's and a Motha'*.

In 2004, Mr. Elling was invited to perform and record a new work by pianist and composer Fred Hersch: a song cycle based on words from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, rendered by a ten-piece jazz ensemble and featuring vocal performances by Mr. Elling and Kate McGarry.

In 2006, as artist-in-residence at the 49th annual Monterey Jazz Festival, Mr. Elling teamed up with bassist and composer John Clayton to create *Red Man/Black Man*, in which Mr. Elling juxtaposed his own writing with the works of Native American poets—most notably Maurice Kenny and Gwendolyn Brooks—in a musical setting that featured the Clayton/Hamilton Orchestra.

In addition to his work as an artist, Mr. Elling served as a National Trustee for the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences beginning in 1999, and was later elected Vice Chair. In that capacity, Mr. Elling helped to create and hosted its first two annual "Salutes to Jazz" and oversaw the creation of the Academy's Lifetime Achievement and Trustees Awards Review Committee.

In 2004, Mr. Elling was elected to join the Illinois Delegation to the Democratic National Convention as a John Kerry Delegate. He also acted as master of ceremonies at a jazz-oriented "Fundraiser for Change" in 2008 at the 92nd Street Y in New York, which featured Roy Haynes, Brad Mehldau, Dianne Reeves and others. He later gave a command performance at the White House for President Obama's first state dinner, where Mr. Elling was accompanied by the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marvin Hamlisch.

Dedicated to You: Kurt Elling Sings the Music of Coltrane and Hartman (Concord, 2009) was recorded live at Lincoln Center, and it shows Mr. Elling at his most expansive. The concert was built on arrangements by Laurence Hobgood for voice, rhythm section, the Ethel Quartet and tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts. Following Grammy nominations for every record he had made as a leader, in 2010 Mr. Elling finally received a Grammy in the "Best Jazz Vocal Album" category for *Dedicated to You*.

Two-time Grammy Award-winner **Ernie Watts** is one of the most versatile and prolific saxophone players on the music scene. In a diverse career that has spanned more than 40 years, he has been featured on over 500 recordings by artists ranging from Cannonball Adderley to Frank Zappa.

Mr. Watts started saxophone at age 13 and won a scholarship to the Wilmington Music School in Delaware, where he studied classical music and technique. He briefly enrolled at West Chester University to study music education but transferred to Berklee College of Music on a *Down Beat* Scholarship. Later, Mr. Watts left Berklee for a spot in Buddy Rich's big band and toured internationally with the group from 1966 to 1968. He then moved to Los Angeles and worked in the big bands of Gerald Wilson and Oliver Nelson. With Mr. Nelson, Mr. Watts had the occasion to record with the legendary Thelonious Monk on *Monk's Blues*.

After 15 solo records for a variety of labels, large and small, Mr. Watts started Flying Dolphin Records, a company he runs with his wife Patricia.

Best known for his collaboration with vocalist Kurt Elling, pianist **Laurence Hobgood** enjoys a multifaceted and dynamic career. As Musical Director for Mr. Elling since 1995, he has played on, arranged and coproduced all of Mr. Elling's CDs (six for Blue Note and two for Concord), each Grammy Award-nominated. He also received his own Grammy nomination in 2001 for his arranging on *Flirting with Twilight*, Mr. Elling's fifth Blue Note release.

Mr. Hobgood was awarded three consecutive fellowships (1990, 1991 and 1992) to perform in the Aspen Music Festival. *The Chicago Tribune* honored him as a 1995 Chicagoan of the Year in the Arts. In 2003, he received a Deems Taylor award, given by ASCAP for the year's outstanding music journalism, for his article "The Art of the Trio," published in *JazzTimes*.

He has played and/or recorded with Jon Hendricks, Larry Coryell, Lee Konitz, Stefon Harris, Peter Erskine, Marc Johnson, Joe Lovano, Benny Maupin, Paul Wertico, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Ernie Watts, Clark Terry, Bobby Watson, Mark Murphy, Bob Mintzer, Von Freeman, Paul McCandless, Buddy Guy, Gary Burton and Eddie Daniels, to name a few. He has performed with Mr. Elling and with his own trio at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Birdland, Chicago's Symphony Center, Ravinia, and at most of the world's most prestigious jazz festivals, including Montreux, North Sea, Monterey, Spoleto USA, Newport, Umbria, Montreal, and the JVC Festivals in Paris and Japan.

His recent CD, *When the Heart Dances*, a duet recording with iconic bassist Charlie Haden, was released in the United States in late summer 2009, and on its U.K. release received many four-star reviews, most notably from *The Independent* and *The Guardian*.

A native and longtime resident of Chicago, Mr. Hobgood has lived in New York since 2006.