



Jacob Blickenstaff

CAL PERFORMANCES
AT HOME

Streaming Premiere – Thursday, November 5, 2020, 7pm

Matthew Whitaker Quartet

Matthew Whitaker, *piano and Hammond B3 organ*

Marcos Robinson, *guitar*

Karim Hutton, *electric bass*

Isaiah Johnson, *drums*

Filmed exclusively for Cal Performances
at the Bowery Ballroom, New York City,
on September 26, 2020.

*Matthew Whitaker is a Yamaha Artist.
Yamaha S3X grand piano provided by Yamaha Artist Services, New York.
Matthew Whitaker is endorsed by Hammond Organ, USA.*

Note: following its premiere, this concert will be available on demand through February 3, 2021.



Matthew Whitaker (*piano and Hammond B3 organ*) was born in 2001 in Hackensack, NJ, and grew up surrounded by music. His love for performing first became apparent at the tender age of three, after Matthew's grandfather gave him a small Yamaha keyboard.

At age nine, Whitaker began teaching himself how to play the Hammond B3 organ. Four years later, he became the youngest artist to be endorsed by Hammond in its more than 80-year history. He was also named a Yamaha Artist at age 15, becoming the youngest musician to join that stellar group of jazz pianists.

Whitaker has had years of music instruction, studying classical piano and drums at the Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenberg Music School in New York City. It is the only community music school for the blind and visually impaired in the United States.

He has previously studied at the Harlem School of the Arts and was a member of both the Jazz House Big Band and the Organ Messengers at Jazz House Kids in Montclair, NJ. Whitaker also attended the Manhattan School of Music's Precollege Jazz Program. He is currently enrolled in the jazz studies program at Juilliard in New York City.

Whitaker has received the Outstanding Soloist Award from Jazz at Lincoln Center's Charles Mingus High School Competition & Festival and the Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival. He was also recognized by the Harlem International Film Festival, which named him "Most Remarkable Young Person on Screen."

He has already toured both here in the United States and abroad, performing before the Youth Assembly at the United Nations headquarters in New York City and on other world-renowned stages including Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Apollo Theater, Carnegie Hall, and Jazz at Lincoln Center in NYC; SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco; the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; the Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts (FL); the Monterey and Newport jazz festivals; and at international venues in the UK, France, Italy, Germany,

Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Morocco, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

Whitaker has performed with an array of outstanding musicians, including Ray Chew, Christian McBride, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Rhoda Scott, Cameron Carpenter, Regina Carter, Jason Moran, Jon Batiste, Cory Henry, Marc Cary, Arturo O'Farrill, James Carter, Roy Ayers, D.D. Jackson, the New York Pops Orchestra, the EFG London Jazz Orchestra, and Hamiet Bluiett and his Bio-Electric Ensemble.

In 2010, Whitaker was a winning participant in the "Child Stars of Tomorrow" competition, as part of Amateur Night at the Apollo. A year later and just 10 years old, he was invited to perform at Stevie Wonder's induction into the Apollo Theater's Hall of Fame. He returned to the venue for Fox television's revival of *Showtime at the Apollo* in 2016, where he thrilled the audience with his rendition of Stevie Wonder's classic "I Wish." Whitaker's television appearances also include NBC's *Today* show, where he was one of three young men featured in the program's "Boys Changing the World" series; Harry Connick Jr.'s *Harry*; Ellen DeGeneres' *Ellen*; and CBS' *60 Minutes*.

Having composed several original compositions, Whitaker names a list of stellar musicians and composers/arrangers as his artistic influences, including organists Dr. Lonnie Smith, Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, and Rhoda Scott; pianists Stevie Wonder, Herbie Hancock, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Ahmad Jamal, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Chick Corea, Jon Batiste, Cory Henry, Marc Cary, Jason Moran, and D.D. Jackson; Chopin and Bach; and drummers Roy Haynes, T.S. Monk, Herlin Riley, Otis Brown III, Otis Brown Jr., and Johnathan Blake.

In 2017, Whitaker was named one of 17 "People to Watch" in New Jersey's *The Record*, one of the state's largest newspapers. He was also cited as an outstanding performer in Crain's New York Business' "20 under 20" list.

In 2018, the online magazine *The Root* added Whitaker to its list of "Young Futurist Leaders." Also that year, he received the Harlem Stage Emerging Artist Award and was singled-out as a rising star by *USA Today* and *201 Magazine*.

In 2019 and 2020, Whitaker received the Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Award for his original compositions “Emotions” and “Underground.”

Whitaker’s first release, *Outta the Box*, debuted in March 2017 and his second *project*, *Now Hear This*, came out on the Resilience Music Alliance recording label in August 2019.

Having been raised in a religious family, **Marcos Robinson** (*guitar*) has been surrounded by gospel music since birth. At the age of 14, his mother gave him a starter guitar kit and he began taking lessons right away. Robinson continued his studies and in 2016 graduated from the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. He has performed with Bebe Winans, Michelle Williams, and Kelly Rowland and recorded with artists including Le’Andria Johnson, Doobie Powell, and Naomi Raine.

Karim “Kace” Hutton (*electric bass*) is a musician and producer from New York City. In 2017, he obtained his bachelor’s degree from Cornell University, where he majored in biology and completed minors in music and business. He prides himself on both his ability to interpret and execute the artist’s vision and his versatility, which allows him to work with an array of artists, producers, and events. Whether live on stage or in the studio, Hutton is known as a disciplined and reliable team player. He pursues excellence through a holistic approach to life and strives to make his mark in the world, both on and off stage. Hutton has had the pleasure of working with a broad range of artists that includes Omari Hardwick, Anita Wilson, Kurt Carr, Kennedy Administration, Vojtech Dyk, Jimmy Cozier, and SAFE.

Isaiah Johnson (*drums*) was born in 1991 in Brooklyn, NY, and has been honing his drumming skills since age five. At six, he became the primary drummer in his local assembly, after which he moved on to play for other churches, groups, and ensembles. He thanks his father—a source of expert knowledge and coaching—for his early exposure to music.

Johnson grew up listening to the sounds of many fine percussionists, talented performers who motivated him and inspired his passion to become a drummer. Although gospel drumming is his prominent style of playing, he enjoys and has experienced multiple kinds of performance styles.

Johnson’s work extends to Off-Broadway, where he has been heard in the play *Tell It, Sing It, Shout It*. He has toured Germany with the New York Gospel Stars and has been the drummer for Pastor Donnie McClurkin, Fred Hammond, the Winans Brothers, Bee Bee Winans, Dorinda Clarke-Cole, and Hezekiah Walker, to name only a few.

Johnson began working with the Matthew Whitaker Quartet in January 2019. When not on tour, he can be heard as the house drummer at venues around the New York/Tri-State area.

Special Thanks

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