



Friday, December 8, 2023, 8pm  
Zellerbach Playhouse

## Matthew Whitaker

Matthew Whitaker, *piano/organ*  
Marcos Robinson, *guitar*  
Liany Mateo, *electric and acoustic bass*  
Johnny Steele, *drums*  
Ivan Llanes, *percussion*

*This program will be performed without intermission  
and last approximately 90 minutes.  
All compositions will be announced from the stage.*

*Matthew Whitaker is a Yamaha Artist.*

*This performance is made possible, in part, by Nancy Orear and Teresa Basgall.*



**MATTHEW WHITAKER, piano/organ**

Born in 2001, Matthew Whitaker's love for playing music began at age three, after his grandfather gave him a small Yamaha keyboard. At nine, he began teaching himself how to play the Hammond B3 organ; only four years later, he became the youngest artist to be endorsed by Hammond in its 89-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 toured both in the US and abroad, performing on prestigious stages including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, the Apollo Theater, SF Jazz Center, Monterey Jazz Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, and at prestigious international venues in the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Morocco, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, to name a few.

His television appearances include Fox's *Showtime at the Apollo*, NBC's *Today*, the syndicated TV talk show *Ellen*, and CBS' *60 Minutes*.

In both 2019 and 2020, Whitaker won the ASCAP Foundation Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Award for his original compositions. His film scores include *Matthew Whitaker: About Tomorrow* (All Arts TV, 2022; producer, musical director, arranger, and original score) and *Starkeisha* (ESPN's *Andscape*, 2022; original score). He was the music director for *Billy Strayhorn: Something To Live For* (world premiere, September 2023, Pittsburgh Public Theater) and his discography includes *Outta The Box* (2017, Jazz Foundation of America), *Now Hear This* (2019, Resilience Music Alliance), and *Connections* (2022, Resilience Music Alliance).

**MARCOS ROBINSON, guitar**

Having been raised in a God-fearing family, Marcos Robinson 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. He continued his studies and in 2016 graduated from the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. Robinson has performed with artists such as Bebe Winans, Michelle Williams, and Kelly Rowland, and recorded with Le'Andria Johnson, Doobie Powell, and Naomi Raine.

**LIANY MATEO, electric and acoustic bass**

Liany Mateo has traveled across North America, Japan, Africa, and the Middle East, performing, touring, and teaching music. Influenced by a mix of hard-hitting straight-ahead swing, free avant-garde jazz, and music with deep pocket groove, she deems herself a chameleon, capable of fitting into many different types of musical situations.

You can find her playing all over New York City at notable venues including Birdland Jazz Club, the Django, and the Jazz Gallery. Most recently, she became a member of the Grammy Award-winning Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra led by the esteemed Arturo O'Farrill. Mateo is the bassist for O'Farrill's *Legacies* album recorded on Blue Note records; she has also been seen on PBS as a featured artist introduced as Christian McBride's protegee.

She has performed with musicians such as Geoffrey Keezer, Fay Victor, and Brandee Younger, and holds a degree in jazz from Michigan State University (2020) and a master's degree from the Berklee Global Jazz Institute (2021). In 2023, she won the esteemed Next Jazz Legacy Award and a grant through New Music USA, led by Terri Lyne Carrington.

**JOHNNY STEELE, drums**

Johnny Steele is a drummer, composer, producer, and educator with a decade of experience performing live music of all genres. Throughout his musical life, he has had the good fortune of performing, touring, and



recording with many respected figures in rock/metal, jazz, R&B, fusion, and pop music—artists including Wynton Marsalis, Marcus Printup, Gilbert Castellanos, Jon Faddis, Immanuel Wilkins, and Dan Nimmer. He has also shared the stage with The Contortionist, Monuments, and other bands.

In addition to enjoying an active performance schedule, Steele also writes *Beat Speak*, a blog in which he discusses his journey as a young musician in today's jazz world as well as topics including the music business, drum lessons, and the occasional shoptalk for his gear-head followers.

Steele is currently pursuing his bachelor's and accelerated master's degrees at the Juilliard School in Manhattan.

#### IVAN LLANES, *percussion*

Ivan Llanes was born on in 1985 in Camaguey, Cuba. He made his way to Havana in 2008 and joined Ricardo Leiva y Sur Caribe,

and the Grammy-nominated Orlando “Maraca” Valle y Otra Visión.

After a US tour with Maraca in 2011, Llanes relocated to New York to expand his musical career with a variety of world-renowned musicians. Since then, he has become an indispensable member of the Latin and Latin jazz communities. The versatility on his playing has added to his success, leading to collaborations with many artists performing a wide variety of music. He has performed/recorded with Katreese Barnes, Colin Hay, Arturo O’Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, Nella, Carlinhos Brown, Descemer Bueno, and Mario “Mayito” Rivera, to name a few.

Llanes is currently working on his own project, the Cuban Way, which is an effort to reflect the wide variety of his musical influences, while incorporating elements from Cuba and US, in a creative setting that showcases both his energy and passion.