



# FIFTY YEARS *Forward*

FT. RACHEL AZBELL & MICAH THOMAS

AUGUST 5, 2022 | 8 P.M.  
LINCOLN THEATRE

[JAZZARTSGROUP.ORG](http://JAZZARTSGROUP.ORG) | [JAG.TV](http://JAG.TV)



# A B O U T TONIGHT'S A R T I S T S

## SAXOPHONES

Byron Rooker  
Shawn Wallace  
Michael Cox  
Pete Mills  
Kris Keith

## TRUMPETS

Dwight Adams  
Jim Powell  
Erik Gimbel  
Joey Tartell

## TROMBONES

Linda Landis  
Ryan Hamilton  
Ben Crowder  
Jeremy Smith

## RHYTHM

Bobby Floyd | Piano  
Andy Woodson | Bass  
Bob Breithaupt | Drums

Musicians of the Columbus Jazz Orchestra  
are represented by the Central Ohio  
Federation of Musicians Local 103 of the  
American Federation of Musicians.



# BYRON STRIPLING

## ABOUT TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

### **Byron Stripling**

With a contagious smile and captivating charm, trumpet virtuoso, Byron Stripling, has ignited audiences internationally. As soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra, Stripling has performed frequently under the baton of Keith Lockhart, as well as being featured soloist on the PBS television special, "Evening at Pops," with conductors John Williams and Mr. Lockhart. Currently, Stripling serves as artistic director and conductor of the highly acclaimed Columbus Jazz Orchestra.



Since his Carnegie Hall debut with Skitch Henderson and the New York Pops, Stripling has become a pops orchestra favorite throughout the country, soloing with Boston Pops, National Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Cincinnati Pops, Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Toronto Symphony, and Houston Symphony, to name a few. He has been a featured soloist at the Hollywood Bowl and performs at jazz festivals throughout the world.

An accomplished actor and singer, Stripling was chosen, following a worldwide search, to star in the lead role of the Broadway bound musical, "Satchmo." Many will remember his featured cameo performance in the television movie, "The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles," and his critically acclaimed virtuoso trumpet and riotous comedic performance in the 42nd Street production of "From Second Avenue to Broadway."

Television viewers have enjoyed his work as soloist on the worldwide telecast of The Grammy Awards. Millions have heard his trumpet and voice on television commercials, TV theme songs including "20/20," CNN, and soundtracks of favorite movies.

Byron Stripling earned his stripes as lead trumpeter and soloist with the Count Basie Orchestra under the direction of Thad Jones and Frank Foster. He has also played and recorded extensively with the bands of Dizzy Gillespie, Woody Herman, Dave Brubeck, Lionel Hampton, Clark Terry, Louis Bellson, and Buck Clayton in addition to The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, and The GRP All Star Big Band.

In January 2020, Byron Stripling was appointed Principal Pops Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, holding the Henry and Elsie Hillman Principal Pops Conductor Chair. This is only the second time in the orchestra's history that a Principal Pops Conductor has been named. In this role, Stripling succeeds the Pulitzer, Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award-winning conductor, composer, pianist Marvin Hamlisch.

## **Rachel Azbell**

Accomplished young jazz vocalist, Rachel Azbell seeks to put her own stamp on the standards while paying homage to the inspiring women that have come before her. Her sultry, soulful tone is particularly inspired by jazz greats Ella Fitzgerald and Nancy Wilson.

Rachel performs regularly in the Columbus, Ohio area for public and private engagements and made her debut performance with the Columbus Jazz Orchestra in April 2021. She is also a leader in nonprofit jazz education as the Education Program Manager at the Jazz Arts Group of Columbus (JAG.)

There, Rachel has worked towards increased accessibility for vocal jazz education for middle and high schoolers through the creation of the Columbus Youth Jazz Vocal Lab, the Jazz Academy Vocal Workshop and other various programs.

Rachel recently graduated with her Master of Music in jazz studies from the esteemed University of North Texas. During her time there, she served as a teaching fellow for the vocal jazz area, where she instructed private lessons and undergraduate courses in jazz studies and directed the West End Vocal Jazz Ensemble, which was a recipient of a 2021 Downbeat Student Jazz Award.

Rachel also recently won a 2022 Downbeat Student Jazz Award for her outstanding performance in the small vocal jazz group category (graduate college).

For more information on Rachel, please visit her website at [rachelazbell.com](http://rachelazbell.com).



# MICAH THOMAS

## ABOUT TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

### Micah Thomas

Micah Thomas was born in 1997 in Columbus, Ohio. He started playing songs on the piano by ear at the age of 2, and shortly afterwards he started private piano training. From his sophomore year of high school onwards, Micah began gigging regularly with violinist Christian Howes, and was a regular faculty member at his annual Creative Strings Workshop from 2015-2018. He also has appeared several times with Byron Stripling and the Columbus Jazz Orchestra as a guest artist, performing with John Clayton and Joshua Redman for their 45th anniversary concert series in 2017. He has also performed throughout Ohio with other musicians including JD Allen, Billy Contreras, Eddie Bayard, George Delancey, Cedric Easton, and Bobby Floyd.



In 2015, Micah Thomas received the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship from the Juilliard School, and received his Master of Music (M.M.) degree in 2020. He is now touring and performing locally and internationally, both as a leader of his own trio, a steady member of the Immanuel Wilkins Quartet and the Giveton Gelin Quintet, and as a sideman for Ambrose Akinmusire, Lage Lund, Billy Drummond, Zoh Amba, Stacy Dillard, Joel Ross, Nicole Glover, Joshua Redman, Melissa Aldana, Etienne Charles, Harish Raghavan, Gabe Schneider and others.

In June 2020, Micah Thomas released his first album, “Tide”, which received positive reviews from the New York Journal, The New York Times, JazzTimes, and Financial Times, among others. He also has appeared on several albums as a sideman for Immanuel Wilkins, Billy Drummond, Zoh Amba, Giveton Gelin, and Walter Smith III.

# ABOUT TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

## WESLEY BENJAMIN

### Wesley Benjamin

Wesley Benjamin, 19, is a homeschooled senior. Wesley became interested in music very early in his life because his father was a professional trombonist. When Wesley was two years old, he received his first trumpet, a blue pocket trumpet, to replace his pacifier. At 8 years old he began studying guitar. A few years later, Wesley's love of jazz began when he first played in a jazz combo at a summer music camp in Yellow Springs. After becoming interested in jazz, he joined a homeschool band program run by Dennis Farmer, where he plays both trumpet and guitar in concert band and jazz band, and studies music theory and composition.



Wesley has also played in the All-State Jazz Band (lead and solo trumpet), All Ohio State Fair Band (principal and solo trumpet), Northwestern High school jazz band (guitar), Wittenberg University Jazz Ensemble (lead trumpet, solo trumpet, and guitar), Central State Jazz Lab Band (guitar), Springfield Youth Symphony (principal trumpet), Southwest Ohio Regional Orchestra (principal trumpet), Columbus Youth Jazz Combos (trumpet and guitar), and Columbus Youth Jazz Orchestra (guitar). His teachers include Bill Dixon, Cameron Voorhees, Fernando Rivera, Tony Powell, and his father.

Wesley will be attending the Eastman School of Music, majoring in Jazz Performance.

**Wesley has been named the 2022 Hank Marr High School Jazz Award winner.**

JAZZ ARTS GROUP  
**2022/2023 50th ANNIVERSARY SEASON**

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG & FRIENDS | The Southern Theatre**

THURS, OCT 13, 2022 • 7:30 PM | FRI, OCT 14, 2022 • 8 PM\*

SAT, OCT 15, 2022 • 8 PM | SUN, OCT 16, 2022 • 3 PM

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**AARON DIEHL TRIO | The Lincoln Theatre**

THURS, OCT 27, 2022 • 8 PM\*

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS | The Southern Theatre**

WED NOV 30, 2022 • 7:30 PM | THURS, DEC 1, 2022 • 7:30 PM

FRI, DEC 2, 2022 • 8 PM\* | SAT, DEC 3, 2022 • 8 PM | SUN, DEC 4, 2022 • 3 PM

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**MICAH THOMAS QUARTET | The Lincoln Theatre**

THURS, JAN 19, 2023 • 8 PM\*

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**MARIA SCHNEIDER, NEA JAZZ MASTER | The Southern Theatre**

THURS, FEB 9, 2023 • 7:30 PM | FRI, FEB 10, 2023 • 8 PM\*

SAT, FEB 11, 2023 • 8 PM | SUN, FEB 12, 2023 • 3 PM

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**KENNY BANKS AND KENNY BANKS JR. BAND | The Lincoln Theatre**

THURS, FEB 23, 2023 • 8 PM\*

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**THE GREATEST JAZZ CONCERT IN THE WORLD PART II**

**The Southern Theatre**

THURS, MAR 9, 2023 • 7:30 PM | FRI, MAR 10, 2023 • 8 PM\*

SAT, MAR 11, 2023 • 8 PM | SUN, MAR 12, 2023 • 3 PM

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**RAY CHARLES AND THE ROOTS OF R&B | The Southern Theatre**

THURS, APR 20, 2023 • 7:30 PM | FRI, APR 21, 2023 • 8 PM\*

SAT, APR 22, 2023 • 8 PM | SUN, APR 23, 2023 • 3 PM

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*

---

**CYJO LEGACY ALL-STAR BIG BAND & SPECIAL GUESTS**

**The Lincoln Theatre**

SAT, APR 29, 2023 • 8 PM\*

*\*Live Stream exclusively on [www.JAG.TV](http://www.JAG.TV)*



# JAZZ ARTS GROUP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

---

**Gil Gradisar** | President  
Partner | The Behal Law Group

**Gary Wadman** | Past President  
Managing Partner | Baker Hostetler

**Tami Van Tassel** | Treasurer  
Partner | PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

**Larry Smith** | Secretary  
Community Volunteer | Retired

Bob Breithaupt  
Alessandro Ciaffoncini  
Kevin Flanigan, MD  
Dale Greeson  
Donna Gross  
Tom Huesman  
John Johanssen  
Bill Kiefaber  
Robert Lee

Therese McCann  
Sandy Meizlish  
Tim Miller  
Kevin Murch  
Michael Peddicord  
Press Southworth  
Emily Toney  
Kyle Welsh  
Kelly Wilson

## ADMINISTRATION

---

**Press Southworth III**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Yvette Boyer**  
Accountant

**Alex Burgoyne**  
Digital Media Manager

**Adam Burk**  
Executive Deputy Director of Development

**Diane Cattran**  
Grant Manager

**Kristina Cohn**  
Office Administrator & Database Specialist

**Zach Compston**  
Executive Director of Programming and Education

**Byron Stripling**  
CJO Artistic Director

**Mary Manos**  
Orchestra Manager & Special Events Coordinator

**Pete Mills**  
Program Director,  
Jazz at the Lincoln Theatre

**Alexa Molitor**  
Assistant Director of Education and Impact

**Kendal Smith**  
Director of Marketing & Communication

**Louis Tsamous**  
Director of Affiliate Musicians

