

The Branford Marsalis Quartet

with Joey Calderazzo, Eric Revis & Justin Faulkner + Nikki Yeoh

Start times: 8pm

Running time: 2 hours 25 minutes including interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change

Patrick McMahon explores the backstory to the Grammy-award winning jazz super group ahead of their performance

Since its first album together was released in 1986, The Branford Marsalis Quartet has gone from strength to strength in its achievements and quality of performances. The group is defined by its adaptability, lyricism, and masterful ability to turn the most delicate atmospheres into full-throated charges of energy, and has been acclaimed as one of the greatest contemporary small jazz bands in the world on account of its creative output and virtuoso players.

As a result of regularly performing together with a remarkably consistent line-up for more than 30 years, the quartet has formed a powerful and intimate musical bond that few ensembles can boast of. Undoubtedly, it is this that makes their performances such an impressive yet effortless display of musical communication, which is why the group is so well respected within the music community. As acoustic jazz goes, there are not many groups playing today that have garnered such a strong reputation for musical excellence.

On the group's longevity, Branford Marsalis has noted 'some musicians may need to work in different projects to create the illusion of sounding different by changing the context, whereas we are confident that we can adjust our group sound so we don't have to change the context... Staying together allows us to play adventurous, sophisticated music and sound good. Lack of familiarity leads to defensive playing, playing not to make a mistake. I like playing sophisticated music, and I couldn't create this music with people I don't know.'

As well as winning a Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Album, Individual or Group with their album *Contemporary Jazz*, the group have received numerous Grammy nominations for their outstanding work including their last album *Upward Spiral*, which featured Kurt Elling as guest vocalist. Marsalis said that working with a vocalist 'totally changed how we play. We became tighter, because it was more about what we could do to support.' As a result, the quartet decided that they wanted their next instrumental album to have less of a 'jam session' feel to it and instead exhibit material that had been developed over time out on the road.

The release of this new album *The Secret Between the Shadow and The Soul*, in fact falls on the date of the quartet's show at the Barbican. It was recorded in Melbourne, Australia whilst the group were on an international tour in 2018 and will be the quartet's sixteenth release. Tracks from the album that have been played out live have already drawn praise from music critics, and the premiere of the quartet's take on Andrew Hill's 'Snake Hip Waltz' has created a buzz of excitement around it.

Marsalis is supported in his quartet by pianist Joey Calderazzo and bassist Eric Revis, who have both played with the group for twenty years, as well as drummer Justin Faulkner, the 'rookie' who joined them in 2009. Revis is credited as composing the pieces 'Dance of the Evil Toys' and 'Nilaste' on the newest album, while Calderazzo contributed 'Cianna' and 'Conversations Among the Ruins'.

A member of one of jazz's most legendary families, band leader Branford Marsalis has gained a formidable reputation over the years as an exceptional instrumentalist, bandleader, composer and educator. He played with the famous Jazz Messengers in his early years and has had guest turns with musical legends such as Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Herbie Hancock and Sonny Rollins. His achievements include accumulating three Grammy awards and his citation as a Jazz Master along with his father and brothers by the National Endowment for the Arts.

barbican

'My approach in both writing and soloing is melodic and rhythmic, with harmony third,' Marsalis has said. 'We mould the harmony to the melody, where too many people let the harmony dictate. And we play in the cracks. I want to channel that vibe of all the great music I've heard, but to apply my own ideas.'

Marsalis has proven himself to be a remarkably versatile musician throughout his genre-spanning career. As well as his achievements in the jazz world, he has delivered acclaimed performances of classical repertoire with such prestigious orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, The Bavarian State Orchestra and The Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. He is even credited as having been one of the Grateful Dead's favourite musicians to jam with, which is no mean feat, and as a composer he has scored music for both film and stage productions.

However, it is through playing jazz that Marsalis has drawn his greatest acclaim as a player, and the quartet continues to be his favourite medium for performing this music. Fresh off the back of their exciting new album, the Branford Marsalis Quartet's Barbican show promises to be a virtuosic masterclass from one of jazz's finest names.

Jazz FM Instrumentalist of the year in 2017, Nikki Yeoh plays a solo piano set supporting the Branford Marsalis Quartet, drawing from the music on her acclaimed solo album *Solo Gemini*. Since her emergence on the British jazz scene in the mid-90s, she has proved to be an improviser, composer and all-round adventurer who has continually sought to broaden her musical horizons – a creative free spirit who has collaborated with the likes of Courtney Pine and Cleveland Watkiss, and in recent months, Denys Baptiste, Carleen Anderson and Speech Debelles.

Performers

The Branford Marsalis Quartet are:

Branford Marsalis – saxophones

Joey Calderazzo – piano

Eric Revis – bass

Justin Faulkner – drums

Support

Nikki Yeoh – piano/vocals

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