

PHOTO BY MARK HIGASHINO



**DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER AND THE MEMPHIS SOULPHONY:  
*MEMPHIS . . . YES, I'M READY***

Tuesday, April 9, 2019, at 7:30pm  
Colwell Playhouse

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# PROGRAM

## **DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER AND THE MEMPHIS SOULPHONY: MEMPHIS . . . YES, I'M READY**

Barry Campbell, bass  
Curtis Pulliam, trumpet  
Bryant Lockhart, saxophone  
Charlton Johnson, guitar  
Skyler Jordan, background vocals  
Monet Owens, background vocals  
Carlos Sargent, drums  
Farindell "Dell" Smith, piano/organ  
Shelby Shariatzadeh, road manager  
Tim Zick, sound engineer  
Tulani Bridgewater-Kowalski, manager

*This performance will be announced from the stage. Songs performed may include the following tracks from the album Memphis . . . Yes, I'm Ready:*

- *Yes, I'm Ready*
- *Giving Up*
- *Can't Get Next To You*
- *Going Down Slow*
- *Why? (Am I Treated So Bad)*
- *B.A.B.Y.*
- *Thrill Is Gone*
- *The Sweeter He Is*
- *Can't Stand The Rain*
- *Don't Be Cruel*
- *Hound Dog*
- *Try A Little Tenderness*
- *(Take My Hand) Precious Lord*

*This performance will be presented with no intermission.*

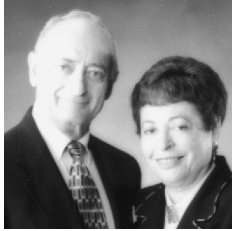
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*Dee Dee Bridgewater and the Memphis Soulphony appear by arrangement with:  
Jack Randall, President  
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173 Brighton Ave  
Boston, MA 02134*

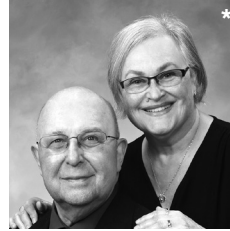
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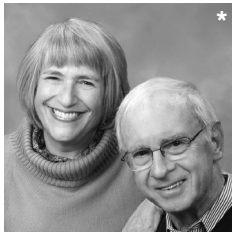
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## PROGRAM NOTES

Memphis, Tennessee. Every picture tells a story; every journey begins differently. The story of Dee Dee Bridgewater's stunning new album, *Memphis . . . Yes, I'm Ready*, begins in that city where she was born at Collins Chapel Hospital, located not far from where the album was recorded at producer Willie Mitchell's historic Royal Studios. Bridgewater's father, a trumpet player affectionately known as "Matt the Platter Cat," was a DJ at WDIA, the top Memphis radio station. Even after the family moved to Flint, Michigan, as a young girl Dee Dee would listen to the great sounds of the Memphis music scene by tuning in late night from across state lines. And oh, what a music scene it was!

"Even as a young girl the music moved me, inspired me, made me dance with joy and cry with emotion. My life journey may have started in Mali, West Africa, as a descendent of the Peul tribe and the Fulani of Nigeria (explored on her 2007 recording *Red Earth*, recorded in Mali), but it certainly was nurtured by my childhood in the South and all of the amazing music that I was being exposed to."

To honor the city and her roots, 2017 NEA Jazz Master, three-time Grammy and Tony Award winner, and UN Ambassador for the Food And Agriculture Organization knew that she would have to come back home to do it right. She co-produced the album in tandem with Memphis native and Grammy-winning musician Kirk Whalum as well as Willie Mitchell's son, Grammy-winning engineer Lawrence "Boo" Mitchell, and Bridgewater's daughter/manager, Tulani Bridgewater. *Memphis...Yes, I'm Ready* was recorded at Royal Studios in the fall of 2016 after multiple visits to the city over a period of several years, visits during which Bridgewater absorbed as much of the music, culture, heart, and soul of the city as she could possibly consume.

"Working in Memphis at Royal Studios is like magic," says Bridgewater. "There's so much history that has been recorded in those walls. I just felt I could take this journey in that city with Kirk and Boo. They are my two kingpins, and the two helped me realize this project and bring it to fruition."

Bridgewater was also determined to recapture the same magic and history of the blues, R&B, and soul classics that she takes on as repertoire, and that were originally made in or associated with Memphis. "I wanted people to be able to recall the original versions, but I also wanted them to have a more modern feeling while respecting those originals. I'm doing B.B. King's *The Thrill Is Gone, Going Down Slow* by Bobby Blue Bland, Otis Redding's *Try A Little Tenderness, Can't Get Next To You* by Al Green, *I Can't Stand The Rain* by Ann Peebles and *Why? (Am I Treated So Bad)* by The Staple Singers—it just doesn't get any better than this in terms of material, and the opportunity to make them my own was an opportunity and a challenge I felt honored to take on."

In reality, Bridgewater even prayed her project was on the right path. She said her prayers were answered when out of the blue Memphis' own Stax Records singing legend Carla Thomas dropped by Royal Studios just after Dee Dee had finished mixing Thomas' hit, *B.A.B.Y.*

"Carla Thomas walking in after we finished mixing *B.A.B.Y.* and coming in the studio and us playing it for her and her sharing stories about my father playing with her father, Rufus Thomas, and just sharing about life in Memphis in general was the final affirmation that I needed for the project, the icing on the cake."

The result of this recording is an album that sounds like Memphis and feels like Memphis, but also sounds and feels as only a Dee Dee Bridgewater album can, imbued with her own fierce passion, originality, and incredibly dynamic take on the tracks.

Said Bridgewater, "I want to honor this city, Memphis, which we call Soulsville, which has brought so much joy to so many people around the world. It has always been a part of me, and the proof is the more I come back, the more at home I feel and the more logical it begins to feel that eventually I will move back here. Much of my heart and soul are here."

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# PROFILE

Over the course of a multifaceted career spanning four decades, Grammy and Tony Award-winning jazz giant Dee Dee Bridgewater has ascended to the upper echelon of vocalists, putting her unique spin on standards, as well as taking intrepid leaps of faith in re-envisioning jazz classics. Ever the fearless voyager, explorer, pioneer and keeper of tradition, the three-time Grammy winner most recently won the Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album for *Eleanora Fagan (1915-1959): To Billie With Love From Dee Dee*.

Bridgewater's career has always bridged musical genres. She earned her first professional experience as a member of the legendary Thad Jones/Mel Louis Big Band, and throughout the 70s she performed with such jazz notables as Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, and Dizzy Gillespie. After a foray into the pop world during the 1980s, she relocated to Paris and began to turn her attention back to jazz. Bridgewater began self-producing with her 1993 album *Keeping Tradition* (Polydor/Verve) and created DDB Records in 2006 when she signed with the Universal Music Group as a producer. (Bridgewater produces all of her own CDs.) Releasing a series of critically acclaimed CDs, all but one, including her wildly successful double Grammy Award-winning tribute to Ella Fitzgerald, *Dear Ella*, have received Grammy nominations. Artist Theo Croker is signed to DDB Records, and Irvin Mayfield and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra also recorded a project with Bridgewater released by her label in 2014.

Bridgewater also pursued a parallel career in musical theater, winning a Tony Award for her role as "Glinda" in *The Wiz* in 1975. Having recently completed a run as the lead role of Billie Holiday in the off-Broadway production of *Lady Day*, her other theatrical credits include *Sophisticated Ladies*, *Black Ballad*, *Carmen*, *Cabaret*, and the off-Broadway and West End Productions of *Lady Day*, for which Bridgewater received the British Laurence Olivier Nomination for Best Actress in a Musical.

As a Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Bridgewater continues to appeal for international solidarity to finance global grassroots projects in the fight against world hunger. She is currently on tour worldwide in support of her CD *Memphis . . . Yes, I'm Ready*, and in April 2016 was the recipient of an NEA Jazz Masters Fellows Award with honors bestowed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.