



HARLEM 100
FEATURING MWENSO AND THE SHAKES

Thursday, November 14, 2019, at 7:30pm
Colwell Playhouse

PROGRAM

HARLEM 100

FEATURING MWENSO AND THE SHAKES

CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS BRIANNA THOMAS, MICHELA MARINO LERMAN, AND VUYO SOTASHE

Produced by IMG Artists and JMG Live, in collaboration with National Jazz Museum in Harlem

Selections for tonight's performance will be announced from the stage.

Michael Mwenso, bandleader

Vuyo Sotashe, vocals

Brianna Thomas, vocals

Kyle Poole, drums

Russell Hall, bass

Mathis Picard, piano and keys

Julian Lee, saxophone

Ruben Fox, saxophone

Michela Marino Lerman, tap

Taylor Roig, tour manager and audio

Sarah Escarraz, lighting

Shariffa Ali, creative director

You-Shin Chen, scenic design

Christelle Matou, costume design

Rodrigo Muñoz Molina, costume design

Harlem 100 appears by arrangement with:

IMG Artists

7 West 54th Street

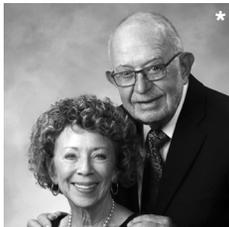
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PROGRAM NOTES

One hundred years after one of the most culturally significant periods in human history, Harlem is in the midst of a resurging creative movement sparked by the centenarian embers left by the wildfire that was the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance has since proven to be an unrivaled period of brilliance in both profound intelligent expression and preeminent entertainment.

The performance features Mwenso and the Shakes, a prolific music collective based in Harlem, who encounter an unexpected journey when a power outage leads them to discovering their connection to the historical figures and great American artists that inspire them today. The musicians bask in the merits and tidings of their ancestral forebearers such as Fats Waller, Bessie Smith, and Duke Ellington, who once lived in the very same neighborhood as they do.

This show, created collectively through a devised process with the cast, invites audiences to enjoy and take part in this interactive, high-energy, music experience celebrating the rich history of the Harlem Renaissance.

PROFILES



MICHAEL MWENSO (bandleader) was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, but spent his teenage years hanging out at the legendary jazz club Ronnie Scott's in London where he was exposed to musicians such as Benny Carter, Elvin Jones, Ray

Brown, and Billy Higgins. In his youth, Mwenso started honing his talents as a trombonist, singer, and performer playing in jump bands, reggae, and Afrobeat horn sections and at hard-bop sessions. Mwenso's talent as a performer caught the attention of many, which subsequently led him to meet James Brown who allotted space for him to sing and dance at his London shows.

In 2012, friend and jazz musician Wynton Marsalis brought Mwenso to New York City to serve as curator and programming associate at Jazz at Lincoln Center where he also booked nightly sets at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola. Over the next few years, Mwenso booked and performed with the likes of Cécile McLorin Salvant, Jon Batiste, Aaron Diehl, Sullivan Fortner, and Jamison Ross.

Through these performances at Dizzy's, Mwenso began to collaborate with a wide variety of Juilliard-trained musicians that soon became known as The Shakes. This unique group of global artists presents music that merges entertainment and artistry with a formidable timeline of jazz and blues through African and Afro-American music.



BRIANNA THOMAS (vocals) is a New York City singer and bandleader with "a strong voice and a big range" (*New York Times*). She draws on the influence of the great blues women of our past. Beyond a healthy serving of sass, Sarah Vaughn's influence contributes

to Thomas' style, communicating a myriad of moods and feelings. Add to that a coyness reminiscent of Nancy Wilson, an Ella-esque skill and enthusiasm for scatting, and the stylistic breadth and vocal grandeur evocative of Dianne Reeves. Thomas' talents have propelled her to many successful performances at the Montreux, North Sea, and Umbria Jazz Festivals. She has performed across the country from New Orleans to Washington, DC's Kennedy Center with appearances with Fred Anderson, Von Freeman, Houston Person, and the Barber Brothers. Thomas was a resident in both the 2001 and 2002 Betty Carter Jazz Ahead Programs and was awarded "High School Jazz Vocalist of the Year" by *Down Beat* magazine in 2001. Notably, Thomas is the youngest person ever to be inducted into Peoria's African American Hall of Fame at the age of 13.



MICHELA MARINO LERMAN (tap) is a globally sought after tap dance artist, performer, choreographer, educator, and all-around creative spirit. *The Huffington Post* has called her a “hurricane of rhythm” and the *New York Times* has called her a “prodigy” and has

described her dancing as “flashes of brilliance.” She has studied with Buster Brown, Gregory Hines, Leroy Myers, and Marion Coles and has performed with many masters such as Wynton Marsalis, Savion Glover, Jon Batiste and Stay Human, Roy Hargrove, Cecile McLorin Salvant, Benny Golson, Marcus Roberts, and many more. In 2017, Lerman conceived, choreographed, and starred in *This Joint is Jumpin* which debuted in Andrew Lloyd Weber’s new London West End Theatre, The Other Palace. Lerman is often a bandleader at some of New York’s greatest music venues such as Jazz at Lincoln Center, Smalls, Ginny’s Supper Club, and Joe’s Pub.



VUYO SOTASHE (vocals) is a young South African jazz vocalist who moved to New York City in 2013 after being awarded the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to pursue a Master of Music at William Paterson University. Since then, he has gone

to win First Prize at the very first Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival Vocal Competition in 2014 and performed on the festival’s main stage the following year. More recently, he won the Audience Prize Award and placed second overall at the Shure Montreux Jazz Voice Competition in 2015, held at the annual Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. In the same year, he placed third in the prestigious Thelonious Monk Institute International Jazz Vocal Competition, where he was the very first male vocalist ever to place in the competition’s finals.