The Ellis Marsalis Quartet

Friday, December 11
The Englert Theatre
Hancher
University of Iowa
The program will be announced from the stage

ELLIS MARSALIS QUARTET

Ellis Marsalis  piano
Doug Douget  saxophone
Jason Stewart  bass
Jason Marsalis  drums

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

ELLIS MARALIS (piano) is regarded by many as the premier modern jazz pianist in New Orleans. The story starts in New Orleans, with the birth of Ellis L. Marsalis, Jr. in 1934. Although the city was noted for Dixieland and rhythm-and-blues, Ellis was more interested in the bebop sounds coming from Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. His first recording was modern jazz music performed with fellow New Orleans musicians Ed Blackwell (who eventually became the drummer for Ornette Coleman), clarinetist Alvin Batiste, bassist Richard Payne, and saxophonist Harold Battiste as the American Jazz Quintet.

After earning a BA in music education from Dillard University in 1955, Marsalis continued to play modern jazz with his local colleagues until enlisting in the Marine Corps the following year. He soon became a member of the Corps Four, a Marines jazz quartet that performed on television and radio to boost recruiting efforts.

After the Marines and a brief teaching stint in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, he returned to New Orleans with his wife, Dolores, and then four children to work in his father’s motel business while freelancing at gigs around town, such as recording with the Adderley Brothers. From 1967-70, Ellis performed with trumpeter Al Hirt.

In the 1970s, he studied music education at Loyola University, eventually earning a master’s degree. In 1974, he became the director of jazz studies at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts high school, mentoring such contemporary artists as Reginald Veal, Terence Blanchard, and Harry Connick, Jr. His sons Branford, Wynton, Delfeayo, and Jason attended the center as well.

After three years teaching at the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, he joined the University of New Orleans, where he spent 12 years heading the jazz studies department. To celebrate his retirement in 2001, the entire Marsalis family performed, and the concert was captured on the release The Marsalis Family: A Jazz Celebration.

In 2008, Ellis was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. In 2011, Marsalis and his family were awarded the highest honor in jazz as they were named NEA Jazz Masters, the first group award ever distributed by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Marsalis continues to be active as a performing pianist leading, and occasionally touring, his own quartet. He has several recordings on the CBS-SONY label and currently releases recordings on his own recording label, ELM Records, developed with his wife, Dolores, and son Jason.

DOUG DOUGET (saxophone) was raised in Gonzales, Louisiana, and was adopted into a mixed race family. His Cajun father exposed him to all things Acadian from food to music. In a region known for mixing African, Latin, Native American, and European traditions and cultures, Douget celebrates his part in this great community of mixed cultures that has always been a hot bed for jazz musicians.

At age 10, Derek started playing the saxophone. In high school, he first heard the recordings of Ornette Coleman, Charlie Parker, and Count Basie. These recordings resonated so strongly within him that Douget decisively re-directed his career from playing classical saxophone to a career in jazz so he could better express his individuality.

Douget studied at the University of New Orleans under Ed Petersen and was
mentored by Ellis Marsalis and Harold Battiste. To further advance his jazz dexterity, he completely immersed himself in the great talent of the New Orleans music community, learning from and working with established jazz “elders” and an eclectic range of bands, from the Latin band Mas Mamones to the popular Henry Butler and the traditional clarinetist Dr. Michael White. By the time he graduated in 1997, Douget had performed with many notable musicians on the New Orleans scene, toured nationally with Nicholas Payton, recorded the movie soundtrack Soul of the Game with Terence Blanchard, and was a member of the Ellis Marsalis Quartet.

Playing the alto and soprano saxophones, in 2002 Douget released his debut CD Perpetual Motion. The following year, he shifted to playing primarily the tenor saxophone, which more naturally fit his sound. Douget then concentrated on earning a master’s degree from the University of New Orleans, which he completed in 2005.

After the flooding of New Orleans, Douget moved to Brooklyn, New York, and continued to record and tour internationally with the likes of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, Maurice Brown, and Ellis Marsalis. At the close of 2009, the saxophonist and his wife moved back to New Orleans where he enjoys playing with the great community of musicians in the city where he developed his jazz voice.

JASON STEWART (bass) started playing the bass at age 17 in his hometown of New Orleans. He was introduced to jazz at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, where he studied with trumpeter Clyde Kerr Jr. and bassist Bill Huntington. After high school, he performed regularly with many New Orleans musicians including trumpeters Leroy Jones and Nicholas Payton, pianist Ellis Marsalis, drummers Jason Marsalis and Shannon Powell, trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis, and saxophonist Victor Goines, while pursuing a degree in communications from Tulane University.

After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree, Stewart moved to New York City to pursue a career in music. At the end of 2001, he moved back to New Orleans but continued to spend much time in New York. Between 2001 and 2005, Stewart freelanced around New Orleans, as well as playing regularly in the Ellis Marsalis Quartet and occasionally in the groups of Nicholas Payton.

After Hurricane Katrina hit the crescent city in 2005, he spent six months helping his family pick up the pieces and then moved back to Brooklyn, where he now lives. In 2010 he received an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School of Music. Stewart currently splits his time between New Orleans and New York City, working with many New York and New Orleans musicians alike, and continues to play in the Ellis Marsalis Quartet.

JASON MARSALIS (drums) is the son of pianist and music educator Ellis Marsalis and his wife, Dolores, and the youngest sibling of Wynton, Branford, and Delfeayo. Together, the four brothers and their patriarch Ellis, make up New Orleans’ venerable first family of jazz.

Ellis and Dolores began cultivating Marsalis’ interest in music at age 3 with the purchase of a toy drum set. By age 6, not only had Marsalis received his first real drum set, but he was also taking lessons from legendary New Orleans drummer James Black. At age 7, he was sitting in with his father’s jazz group, as well as playing with trombonist brother Delfeayo. In 1991, he auditioned and was accepted to the acclaimed New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts high school (NOCCA).
Throughout his high school years, he continued to hone his skills by playing gigs with his father and brothers, as well as studying orchestral percussion techniques at the venerable Eastern Music Festival.

Shortly after graduation from NOCCA in 1995, Marsalis ascended to the drum throne of a new group led by virtuoso pianist Marcus Roberts. Despite a demanding touring schedule with Roberts, Marsalis furthered his education by attending Loyola University in New Orleans, as well as studying composition with Roger Dickerson at Southern University.

While Marsalis has worked with such international jazz luminaries as Joe Henderson and Lionel Hampton, he remains visible on the New Orleans scene working with a diverse cross section of bands from Casa Samba (Brazilian) to Neslort (jazz fusion). He is also co-founder of the Latin jazz group Los Hombres Calientes. Additionally, he regularly hosts a local jazz jam where he plays vibraphone.

Marsalis' style and tastefulness is well documented on recordings with artists such as the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Marcus Printup, and Marcus Roberts to name but a few. He has produced two albums under his own name, *Year of the Drummer* (1998) and *Music in Motion* (2000), as well as producing a reissue of his father’s earlier recorded work, *Syndrome* (1996).

With each passing year Jason Marsalis continues to grow and develop as both a composer and performer. With a fire in his heart and a passion for the music, his will to swing has never been more resolute. The maturity of this young lion and the command he possesses over his instrument is clearly evident to those who have heard or seen him.
Drawing Closer, a free outdoor event celebrating Hancher’s upcoming opening, included performances of Squonk Opera’s Pneumatica.

Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings were not deterred by rain at the Iowa Soul Festival. Sightings of lightning, however, put an end to the evening’s festivities for safety reasons.

Lucky Plush’s The Queue included live music by The Claudettes.
A doctor at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics paused to listen to the Brentano String Quartet when they performed there as part of the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program.

Lynne Arriale (piano), Carla Cook (vocals), and Grace Kelly (saxes) performed “You Know How I Feel” A Tribute to Nina Simone, Abbey Lincoln, and Joni Mitchell.

Las Cafeteras believes in community, and they backed up that belief by inviting members of the audience on stage to speak, sing, and dance with them.

Mandolin virtuoso (and future host of A Prairie Home Companion) Chris Thile performed an evening of Bach Sonatas & Partitas, traditional bluegrass tunes, and original songs.
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