
PRESS RELEASE



The Flynn Announces Saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin as the Curator of the 40th Burlington Jazz Festival

Festival opens with Grammy-winning singer Samara Joy

BURLINGTON, VT — From **June 7-11, 2023**, Vermont celebrates the **40th anniversary of the Burlington Jazz Festival**, produced by the Flynn and presented by New England Federal Credit Union. The Flynn is thrilled to welcome incredible alto saxophonist, bandleader, and educator **Lakecia Benjamin** as this year's festival curator. Lakecia Benjamin has graced the cover of some of the biggest jazz magazines around, including recent issues of *DownBeat* and *Jazzwise*, hot on the heels of her acclaimed new star-studded album, *Phoenix*. She is a white-hot rising star in the jazz world right now, and *Phoenix* makes this clear, with high-profile contributions from Georgia Anne Muldrow, Patrice Rushen, Angela Davis, Wayne Shorter, and more. "Hustle and ingenuity have defined Benjamin's career," reads a recent *New York Times* profile, "and her strong will, warmth, and down-to-earth persona come through in the music."

The festival kicks off with a performance by newly-minted **2023 multi-Grammy-winner** (for Best New Artist and Best Jazz Vocal Album) **Samara Joy** on the Flynn Main Stage on **Wednesday, June 7**. Samara Joy is considered the voice of the next generation—inspired by and compared to Sarah Vaughan, who headlined the very first Burlington Discover Jazz Festival. She is only the second jazz artist in history to win the Best New Artist Grammy. Vermont musicians have always been key to the festival, and on **Sunday, June 11** Lakecia has invited local singer-songwriter **Myra Flynn** to make her Flynn Main Stage debut with a new show titled *Roar of the Queen*, a powerful musical concert featuring the Lake Champlain Mass Choir and other surprise guests to celebrate the upcoming release of Myra's long-awaited new album.

Tickets are on sale now for Flynn members for Samara Joy on June 7 and Myra Flynn on June 11. Tickets go on sale to the general public for these two shows on March 3. Find out more and get tickets at flynnvt.org.

"It is a special honor for me to join the Burlington Jazz Festival for its 40th anniversary," says curator Lakecia Benjamin. "I want to honor the legacy of this music while looking at the future: paying homage to legendary jazz figures, honoring the generation of heroes and teachers who shaped my playing, and enlisting the help of my peers to ensure the future of jazz as a vital and shapeshifting art form. With the help of the Flynn team, as well as community partners, we are putting together an exciting festival that celebrates the past 40 years of jazz in Burlington while looking ahead to the possibilities for the next 40."

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"We are proud to partner with such a powerful and talented artist to lead the Burlington Discover Jazz Festival's 40th year," said Jay Wahl, Flynn executive director. "Lakecia is one the best new music leaders in our country. Plus she brings the experience, passion, and connections of someone who has toured with Stevie Wonder, Prince, Alicia Keys, and so many more. The energy she will inject into this festival will be extraordinary."

Jazz vocalist **Samara Joy** is now a two-time Grammy winner, picking up trophies at the 2023 ceremony for Best New Artist and Best Vocal Jazz Album. Her voice, rich and velvety yet precociously refined, has already earned her fans like Anita Baker and Regina King, and has been compared to the likes of Sarah Vaughan (who headlined the first Burlington Discover Jazz Festival in 1984), Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday. In 2019, she won the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, and she's since performed with legends like Christian McBride and Bill Charlap. She joins the ranks of her idols with her recent album, *Linger Awhile*, which has entered the pop charts, and was recorded for the venerable Verve label. Samara Joy plays the Flynn Main Stage on the Burlington Jazz Festival's opening night, June 7.

Myra Flynn's indie-soul songs blend affecting vocals with a lyrical delivery that doesn't let one get too comfortable. As the *New England Deli* magazine puts it, "Her vocal influences have as much in common with Ani DiFranco and Shawn Colvin as they do with Rihanna and Jill Scott." She has shared stages with Ivan Neville (Dumpstaphunk), Mike Gordon (Phish), Gabrielle Gordon (Natalie Merchant), Slick Rick, Kyp Malone, Anais Mitchell, and Lee "Scratch" Perry. As *Seven Days* put it, her music "recalls hints of Alabama Shakes and, at her very danciest, Myra Flynn seems almost to channel Janet Jackson in her badass prime." Myra Flynn plays the Flynn Main Stage on the jazz festival's closing day, June 11.

Tickets are on sale now for Flynn members for Samara Joy and Myra Flynn. Tickets for these two shows go on public sale on March 3. More announcements about the Burlington Jazz Festival are coming soon. The full festival lineup will be revealed on April 18. **Find out more about the 40th Burlington Jazz Festival at flynnvt.org.**

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