ARTISTS
Kurt Elling, vocals
Gary Versace, piano
Clark Sommers, bass
John McLean, guitar
Kendrick Scott, drums

PROGRAM
Passion World

The program will be announced from the stage.

There will be a pre-show conversation at 6:30 pm with Kurt Elling, Professor Kathryn Starkey, and Professor David Lummus.

KORET JAZZ PROJECT
This program was funded by the Koret Foundation. The Koret Jazz Project is a multiyear initiative to support, expand, and celebrate the role of jazz in the artistic and educational programming of Stanford Live.

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.
KURT ELLING
Grammy winner Kurt Elling is among the world’s foremost jazz vocalists. He won the DownBeat Critics Poll for 14 consecutive years and was named “Male Singer of the Year” by the Jazz Journalists Association eight times in that same span.

Elling’s rich baritone spans four octaves and features both astonishing technical mastery and emotional depth. His repertoire includes original compositions and modern interpretations of standards, all of which are springboards for inspired improvisation, scatting, spoken word, and poetry.

The New York Times declared, “Elling is the standout male vocalist of our time.” The Washington Post added, “Since the mid-1990s, no singer in jazz has been as daring, dynamic, or interesting as Kurt Elling. With his soaring vocal flights, his edgy lyrics, and sense of being on a musical mission, he has come to embody the creative spirit in jazz.”

Elling was the artist-in-residence for the Singapore and Monterey Jazz Festivals. He has also written multidisciplinary works for the Steppenwolf Theatre and the City of Chicago. The Obama Administration’s first state dinner featured Elling in a command performance.

Elling is a renowned artist of vocalese—the writing and performing of words over recorded improvised jazz solos. The natural heir to jazz pioneers Eddie Jefferson, King Pleasure, and Jon Hendricks, Elling has set his own lyrics to the improvised solos of Wayne Shorter, Keith Jarrett, and Pat Metheny. He often incorporates images and references from writers such as Rilke, Rumi, Neruda, and Proust into his work.

The late poet and Bollingen Prize winner Robert Creeley wrote, “Kurt Elling takes us into a world of sacred particulars. His words are informed by a powerful poetic spirit.” Said Robert Pinsky, former poet laureate of the United States, “In Kurt Elling’s art, the voice of jazz gives a new spiritual presence to the ancient, sweet, and powerful bond between poetry and music.”

Kurt Elling has toured vigorously throughout his career, thrilling audiences all over the world. In that time he has led his own ensemble and has collaborated with many of the world’s finest orchestras.

Kurt Elling’s Passion World recording culminates nearly five years of collecting and honing songs—and in some cases writing new lyrics—that express love, romance, and heartbreak around the world. Throughout his travels, Elling has observed how deeply felt passions are shaped in countless ways by each unique culture. Those insights have guided the creation of Passion World, a tour-de-force project that is vibrant with diversity, celebrating what makes us all human.

In concert, Elling tells rich stories about the history and context of each of these songs to sweep you away on a grand tour of exotic places, cultures, and times. Passion World is a musical magic carpet taking you on a fascinating journey through the realms of romance in a concert not to be missed.

GARY VERSACE
Since basing himself in New York City in June of 2002, jazz organist, pianist, and accordionist Gary Versace has quickly become one of the busiest and most versatile musicians on the scene, often featured in bands led by musicians such as John Scofield, John Abercrombie, Maria Schneider, Matt Wilson, Lee Konitz, Eliot Zigmund, Scott Wendholt, Joe Magnarelli, Danny Gottlieb, Seamus Blake, John Hollenbeck, Andy LaVerne, Adam Nussbaum, Brad Shepik, Ingrid Jensen, Tim Ries, and many others.

Versace was voted a “Rising Star” on the Hammond organ in the last three DownBeat Critics Polls and was the subject of a feature article in the July 2004 issue of Keyboard magazine.

He has been a featured soloist on several critically acclaimed recordings of recent years: as accordionist on Maria Schneider’s Grammy-winning recordings Concert in the Garden and Sky Blue and as pianist on John Hollenbeck’s Grammy-nominated large-ensemble recording A Blessing.

Over the past five years, Gary Versace has appeared as a leader for the Criss Cross and SteepleChase labels and as a sideman on over 50 recordings with artists on various labels including Palmetto, ACT, Omnitone, Songlines, Pirouet.
High Note, Justin Time, ArtistShare, Fresh Sound, Kind of Blue, and many others.

CLARK SOMMERS
Bassist, composer, and educator Clark Sommers has toured and performed extensively throughout the world. He has had the privilege of performing with Cedar Walton, Darrell Grant, Brian Blade, Ernie Watts, Bennie Maupin, Von Freeman, Ira Sullivan, Frank Wess, Charles McPherson, Peter Bernstein, Lin Halliday, Dana Hall, Jodie Christian, Dana Hall, Ed Halliday, Ted Sirota’s Rebel Souls, the Mighty Blue Kings, and the Chicago Jazz Orchestra, among others.

Sommers is proud to be at home in the bass chair with vocalist Kurt Elling, with whom he tours the globe, bringing jazz to everyone from Istanbul to the Canary Islands. Thus far he has been honored to play on two Grammy-nominated recordings with the band, one of which won the Grammy Award for Best Vocal Jazz Album in 2009.

When not on the road with Kurt Elling, Sommers enjoys leading his own group, Ba(SH). The group includes longtime friends Dana Hall and Geof Bradfield. The group’s first recording, Ba(SH), was released in August 2013 and has received critical acclaim. It was acknowledged on the Notable and Not to Be Missed list by All about Jazz in 2013.

Clark Sommers can also be heard performing with Portland’s Darrell Grant in his Territory ensemble, which includes Brian Blade, Joe Locke, and Steve Wilson.

JOHN McLEAN
Jazz guitarist John McLean’s 25-year career has included work as a performer, composer, arranger, producer, bandleader, and educator. Since completing music studies at the Berklee College of Music and the University of Miami, McLean has toured throughout the world, performing and recording in a wide variety of musical contexts. He has appeared and recorded with Kurt Elling, Mose Allison, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Patricia Barber, Randy Brecker, Adam Nussbaum, Dave Douglas, Arthur Blythe, and many more.

McLean’s 2007 recording, Better Angels (Origin Records), features his exciting septet in a program of original music and innovative arrangements of jazz classics. The project reflects McLean’s increasing interest in combining jazz improvisation with more elaborate compositional structures and fresh instrumental settings.

KENDRICK SCOTT
In the relatively short span of 10 years, drummer and composer Kendrick Scott has established himself as an artist of great versatility and depth. Having toured and recorded with such luminaries as Terence Blanchard, Kurt Elling, Herbie Hancock, the Crusaders, and others, he has proven his ability to adapt his style to virtually any occasion or circumstance and at the same time maintain his own distinctive voice in the process.

In addition to his work as a support figure, he has also developed a reputation as an innovative composer and bandleader, with the help of his ever-evolving musical collective. The Kendrick Scott Oracle began its creative odyssey in 2007 with an eclectic and ambitious debut recording called The Source and followed up on its success with Conviction, an album released by Concord Jazz in March 2013.

Since 2012, Kendrick Scott has been the first-call drummer in jazz vocalist Kurt Elling’s band, and he also plays on Elling’s latest recording, 1619 Broadway: The Brill Building Project. Elling says, “Kendrick is an innovative artist who has dedicated his life to the future of music, and I’m proud to have him on our team.”

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