Saratoga Performing Arts Center Announces "Freihofer’s Jazz Fest Stay Home Sessions" in Partnership with Caffè Lena, June 26-28

JON BATISTE, BÉLA FLECK and ABIGAIL WASHBURN, PEDRITO MARTINEZ Headline the Festival Alongside Acclaimed Local Artists CHUCK LAMB & JORGE GOMEZ, GARLAND NELSON's "REFLECTIONS: A MOTOWN TRIBUTE ENSEMBLE" and SKIDMORE JAZZ INSTITUTE ALUMNI TRIO

Saratoga Springs, NY (June 11, 2020) – Saratoga Performing Arts Center and Absolutely Live Entertainment, in partnership with Caffè Lena announce "Freihofer’s Jazz Fest Stay Home Sessions," presented in lieu of the 2020 Freihofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival, previously cancelled by SPAC due to health and safety concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Headlined by national artists JON BATISTE, BÉLA FLECK and ABIGAIL WASHBURN, and PEDRITO MARTINEZ, Jazz Fest Stay Home Sessions will also feature acclaimed local musicians CHUCK LAMB & JORGE GOMEZ, GARLAND NELSON's "Reflections: A Motown Tribute Ensemble" and the SKIDMORE JAZZ INSTITUTE ALUMNI TRIO. Slated for June 26, 27 and 28 at 8 p.m., the series of streamed concerts will feature produced videos from the national artists alongside performances from Lena's stage from beloved local ensembles. The festival will be free to experience and hosted through Caffè Lena's "Stay Home Sessions" YouTube platform.

"Freihofer’s has been a generous and steadfast supporter of Jazz Fest for the last 23 years. When presented with the possibility of creating a Virtual Jazz Fest, they didn’t miss a beat – pledging to support our efforts to bring great musicians and audience together despite the challenges of COVID-19. Being able to create connection for jazz lovers – and support both national and local musicians, the latter performing from Caffè Lena -- is a privilege,” says Elizabeth Sobol, President and CEO of Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Kicking-off the virtual festival on Friday, June 26 will be a Cuban-themed evening featuring Freihofer’s Saratoga Jazz Festival favorite and Grammy®-nominated, Havana-born music sensation Pedrito Martinez. Martinez will be preceded by Chuck Lamb and Jorge Gomez performing original music exclusive to the event. On Saturday, June 27, fifteen-time Grammy®-winning banjo virtuoso, Béla Fleck together with his wife -- singer, songwriter and banjo player, Abigail Washburn -- will headline the jazz and folk inspired event, preceded by the Skidmore Jazz Institute Alumni Trio, co-presented by the Skidmore Jazz Institute. Closing out the three-day festival on Sunday, June 28 will be globally celebrated musician, bandleader and television personality, Jon Batiste. Garland Nelson's energetic "Reflections: A Motown Tribute Ensemble" open with a program celebrating the soulful sounds of Detroit.

"Caffè Lena and SPAC have gotten very creative to keep delivering music during the shutdown. Fortunately for musicians and fans, we’re thinking outside the box to save Jazz Fest this year. I've never seen so much cooperation among all players
in the music industry. It's clear that, underlying all the business and negotiating, most of the industry is fueled by a genuine belief in the positive power of music. It keeps us inspired and determined to get through this crisis together," says Sarah Craig, Executive Director of Caffè Lena.

“Our ‘stay home sessions’ is a three-night love letter to our longtime festival devotees and a snapshot of the diversity of artistry and music typically heard at the festival. Making this free to the public yet a fundraiser for the Equal Justice Initiative and the crucial work they are doing to end mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenge racial and economic injustice, and to protect basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society is an important part of this presentation that we hope people will support,” says Danny Melnick, President of Absolutely Live Entertainment.

Jazz Fest Stay Home Sessions was created as a way to bring the community and Jazz Fest fans together in a celebration of great jazz music following the cancellation of the in-person Freihofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival, scheduled for the same weekend. To commemorate the 2020 Freihofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival, SPAC has also created a t-shirt featuring original artwork by Skidmore College student Isa Hage. All proceeds will support the Equal Justice Initiative, which is committed to challenging racial and economic injustice and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society. Visit SPAC.org for more details.

For safety and social distancing purposes, Caffè Lena will remain closed to everyone except essential personnel and musicians. Content will be pre-recorded adhering to CDC guidelines.

"FREIHOFER'S JAZZ FEST STAY HOME SESSIONS" LINE-UP:

FRIDAY, JUNE 26 | 8PM

Pedrito Martinez
Four-time Freihofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival headliner, and Grammy®-nominated, Havana-born music sensation, Pedrito Martinez, will share his irresistible and seductive Afro-Cuban grooves to kick-off the festival. Widely regarded as the one of the world’s leading percussionists, he has recorded or performed with Eric Clapton, Wynton Marsalis, Paul Simon, Bruce Springsteen, Chucho Valdez, and Sting.

Chuck Lamb & Jorge Gomez
Chuck Lamb and Jorge Gomez will come together to share their original “Cuban meets Jazz Fusion” music, which they will feature on their new recording project, currently underway. The performance will include pre-recorded percussion and horn tracks from this project -- some with members of Grammy-nominated Tiempo Libre.

Chuck Lamb, as a pianist and composer, has been with the Brubeck Brothers Quartet for 14 years and has performed with the Quartet as well as with his own groups at numerous renowned venues around the world. Lamb was scheduled to perform at the festival with The Brubeck Brothers in celebration of Dave Brubeck's Centennial.

Jorge Gomez is the bandleader and keyboard/pianist of three-time Grammy®-nominated Afro-Caribbean music group Tiempo Libre, which was slated to have its festival debut this June.

SATURDAY, JUNE 27 | 8PM

Béla Fleck & Abigail Washburn
Known to Saratoga audiences for his four festival appearances, fifteen-time Grammy® Award-winning banjo virtuoso, Béla Fleck, has been nominated in more categories than any other artist in Grammy history, and remains a powerfully
creative force globally in bluegrass, jazz, classical pop, rock and world beat. Fleck as a duo with his wife — singer, songwriter and banjo player, Abigail Washburn — has recorded two albums including a self-titled debut that earned the 2016 Grammy® for Best Folk Album and Echo in the Valley, which DOWNBEAT praised as "something close to miraculous."

**Skidmore Jazz Institute Alumni Trio**
The Skidmore Jazz Institute Alumni Trio is comprised of Brian Halliday (piano, recent graduate of the Conservatory of Music at SUNY Purchase College), Samuel Smith (bass, Berklee College graduate, currently pursuing his Masters degree at Bard College), and Quinton Cain (drums, pursuing his Bachelor’s degree at Manhattan School of Music). Members of the trio proudly hail from New York State and have attended the Skidmore Jazz Institute summer program as part of their musical training. The Skidmore Jazz Institute has been called the “non-pareil destination for attentive and engaged instruction in the improviser’s art” by DOWNBEAT. The Institute, now in its 33rd year, has successfully helped to launch the music careers of past festival headliners Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews and Jon Batiste, among others.

**SUNDAY, JUNE 28| 8PM**

**Jon Batiste**
Jon Batiste, who has performed at the festival three times and most recently in 2018, is a globally celebrated musician, educator, bandleader and television personality, recognized for his originality, jaw-dropping talent and dapper sense of style. Jon transitions from commanding the piano with virtuosic skill, to soulfully crooning, to wailing on the "harmonaboard" (a kind of harmonica and keyboard), to curating unique “social music” experiences all over the world. The Forbes “30 under 30” honoree balances a demanding performance schedule with his role as bandleader for the Late Show with Stephen Colbert, and Artistic Director At Large of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, as well as public speaking engagements, master classes and occasional acting gigs and his signature impromptu ‘love riot’ street parade.

**Garland Nelson's "Reflections: A Motown Tribute Ensemble"**
Led by "soulist" and bandleader Garland Nelson, who was originally scheduled to make his festival debut with his Joyful Noise gospel program, "Reflections: A Motown Tribute Ensemble" will bring an ensemble of fronting singers from top capital region bands. "Reflection" pays tribute to the golden age of Soul Music from Motown, Staxx Records, Chess Records, and Philadelphia International.

Generous support for "Freihofer's Jazz Fest at Home Sessions" has been provided by Freihofer's, National Grid, Times Union, and Tom and Anne Gaughan. For more information about the festival, visit SPAC.org.

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**ABOUT FREIHOFER’S SARATOGA JAZZ FESTIVAL:**

Founded in 1978 by jazz impresario George Wein, Freihofer’s Saratoga Jazz Festival is one of the most prestigious and iconic jazz festivals in North America. Initially founded as “the Newport Jazz Festival at Saratoga” the weekend event was renamed Freihofer’s Saratoga Jazz Festival in 1998. The festival has been produced in partnership with Absolutely Live Entertainment since 2009. With an inside seating capacity of 5,200, and lawn seating of 20,000, the two-day, two-stage festival continues to be one of the largest jazz music events in North America, beloved by audiences for both the
remarkable annual line-up of international jazz talent and the spectacular setting at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in the idyllic Saratoga Spa State Park.

ABOUT SARATOGA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER:

The Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC), located in the historic resort town of Saratoga Springs in upstate New York, is one of America’s most prestigious summer festivals. Its tranquil setting in a 2,400-acre park preserve surrounded by hiking trails, geysers, and natural mineral springs draws vacation crowds and arts connoisseurs each year for immersive experiences of performances by resident companies New York City Ballet, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Freihofer’s Saratoga Jazz Festival, Opera Saratoga, and concerts by Live Nation. SPAC also hosts the annual Saratoga Wine and Food Festival in addition to imaginative programming such as the popular “SPAC on Stage” series and Caffè Lena @ SPAC.

SPAC is a 501c3 charitable organization. Donations and proceeds from fundraising events benefit the Center’s children’s education programs and support the vibrancy of its classical season. For more information visit spac.org.