

Friday
MAY 5
7:30 pm

Vanessa Thomas

Acclaimed vocalist known for her five-octave range

Roger Wilder, piano
John Kizilarmut, drums

with

Eric Hitt, bass
Matt Otto, tenor saxophone



**Jeff & Mary
WEINBERG**
JEDEL FAMILY FOUNDATION

Jeff and Mary Weinberg are pleased to support performing arts experiences in our community and help bring world-class artists, like Vanessa Thomas, to the Lied Center stage.

**There will be no intermission during this performance.
Selections will be announced from the stage.**

Vanessa Thomas, soprano/mezzo soprano, is an acclaimed vocalist who delights audiences everywhere. Known for her seamless span of five octaves, she has a unique musical versatility and command in jazz, blues, gospel, classical and music theatre. For over a decade, she has toured nationally with Grammy Award-winning trumpet-virtuoso Doc Severinsen (of *The Tonight Show*).

Recent performances include Robert Ray's "Gospel Mass,"—where she performed as the soprano, alto, and tenor soloist at Carnegie Hall and The Blue Room in Kansas City (American Jazz Museum)—as well as holiday pops shows with The Florida Orchestra and West Virginia Symphony. During the pandemic, Thomas headlined both Kansas City Lyric Opera and the Lied Center of Kansas in a series of free outdoor pop-up concerts.

Past performances include opening with Doc Severinsen at the Hollywood Bowl for Pink Martini, the Arizona Musicfest and with the Cincinnati Pops, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit, Dayton, Milwaukee, Utah, and Winston-Salem Symphonies, as well as the Kansas City Symphony (*Christmasfest*). She also appeared in the PBS American Masters documentary *Never Too Late: The Doc Severinsen Story* (Kevin Bright). Upcoming engagements include appearing with the Indianapolis Symphony in the summer of 2023.

Tonight's new album release, *Vanessa Thomas: Life Is Like a Song*, is her first solo jazz album—a "dream project" that has truly been a joyful collaboration between both the Lied Center and some incredibly gifted jazz musicians.

Vanessa Thomas: Life Is Like a Song • Album liner notes by Doc Severinsen

How I met Vanessa: I went downtown in Clay Center, KS with a desire to get in a good warm-up for a rehearsal with the band in Clay Center. It was a musical tribute to Pauline, the wife of Wayne Snodgrass. Wayne had passed away, and we were gathered together to celebrate Pauline's 99th birthday.

Why the big deal? I knew that their son, C.L. Snodgrass, would be in charge, and C.L. would come in expecting my very best. So, I went downtown, took out my trumpet and started warming up all alone—or so I thought.

And then, there was the sound of a stunning female voice accompanied by the piano. I crept my way to the back of the hall—and there she stood, rather statuesque, and yet very unassuming.

I went down and offered her a job on the spot with the Minnesota Orchestra in our annual Christmas Show. She politely accepted my sudden offer. Flash forward to the big night in Minneapolis. She came out front, sang her first song of the evening and then, after a brief moment...COMPLETE SILENCE.

Then, the audience simply exploded. EXPLODED! 2,000 people leapt to their feet and gave her an ovation that went on for several minutes.

Since that first performance in 2010, Vanessa and I have performed hundreds of concerts together with big bands and symphony orchestras across the U.S. She excels, whether singing jazz standards or classical arias. This album is a fitting tribute to her incredible artistic prowess, much like a very special few of those legendary singers who have gone before her, with a versatility that is unmatched.