

JUST ANNOUNCED—

GRAMMY-winning Samara Joy bridges the jazz and gospel gap, bringing multi-generational family act to The Soraya's Holiday Series

Thurs., Dec. 7 at 8pm in The Soraya's Great Hall

Tickets start at \$39 and are available now at www.TheSoraya.org as part of the ongoing Members-Only package sale. Package sales open to the public on June 27.

(Los Angeles, CA) June 20, 2023—**Samara Joy** returns to The Soraya for a second time in 2023—this time with her multi-generational musical family fusing her jazz and gospel talents for an all-new soulful holiday concert following her sold-out Soraya debut, shared with big band Clayton Hamilton Jazz Orchestra in The Soraya's acclaimed [Jazz at Naz Festival](#).

On Dec. 7, 2023, the young jazz artist with a “majestic stage presence” and “agile upper range like that of Ella Fitzgerald” ([SF Classical Voice](#)) will be joined onstage by members of her talented musical family including her father, uncle, and cousins, to deliver a sparkling evening brimming with the most time-honored songs of the season.

With her effortless grace and style, the 23-year-old became the second jazz performer in GRAMMY history to win the award for Best New Artist earlier this year. She also won for Best Jazz Vocal Album which combines her eclectic musical influences with her experiences growing up in a family whose gospel, Motown, and jazz legacy reaches back several generations.

Music has always been a guiding light in the Bronx native's life, and she got her start at home with grandfather and grandmother Elder Goldwire and Ruth McLendon, gospel singers who led the well-known Philadelphia based The Savettes. Joy's father, Antonio Charles McLendon—is also a talented bassist and vocalist who toured with the renowned Andraé Crouch.

“There’s nothing like family. Your vibratos match. Your tones match,” Samara explained to [NPR Jazz Night in America](#) about singing with her family. “We’re connected in a way that nobody else is... spiritually and creatively, it’s totally fulfilling.”

Ms. Joy and the McLendon family will perform in [a series of concerts](#) together this December—but The Soraya’s Dec. 7 concert will be their only Los Angeles appearance for the holidays.

“This won’t be like what (Soraya) audiences saw earlier in 2023— there’s jazz but there’s also gospel...it’s kind of a jazz-gospel extravaganza,” said Joy’s Manager Matt Pierson, explaining that the family will sing duets, have background, and group vocals, and will be on stage with piano, organ, base, and drums.

“(Samara’s) father, uncle, and two cousins all were part of McLendon tradition of singing gospel as a family. This is Samara bridging the jazz and gospel genres with her family.”

About Samara Joy

With her GRAMMY-Award winning and chart-topping album, *Linger Awhile*, Samara Joy makes her case to join the likes of Sarah, Ella, and Billie as the next mononymous jazz singing sensation recorded by the venerable Verve Records. Her voice, rich and velvety yet precociously refined, has already earned her fans like Anita Baker and Regina King and appearances on the TODAY Show, The Tonight Show w/Jimmy Fallon, The Late Show w/Stephen Colbert, CBS Mornings, Kelly Clarkson, Jennifer Hudson, and more, in addition to millions of likes on TikTok — cementing her status as perhaps the first Gen Z jazz singing star. The New York Times praised the “silky-voiced rising star” for “helping jazz take a youthful turn” while NPR All Things Considered named her a “classic jazz singer from a new generation.” In February 2023, Samara Joy took home two GRAMMYS - Best Jazz Vocal Album and the auspicious Best New Artist award.

Samara is still relatively new to jazz. Growing up in the Bronx, it was music of the past — the music of her parent’s childhoods, as she put it — that she listened to most. She treasures her musical lineage, which stretches back to her grandparents **Elder Goldwire** and **Ruth McLendon**, both of whom performed with Philadelphia gospel group the Savettes, and runs through her father, who is a singer, songwriter and producer who toured with gospel artist Andraé Crouch. “Sometimes I catch myself when I’m singing — I’m like, ‘Whoa, that was a dad moment’,” Samara quips. Eventually, she did follow in the family tradition, singing in church and then with the jazz band at Fordham High School for the Arts, with whom she won Best Vocalist at JALC’s Essentially Ellington competition. That led to her enrolling in SUNY Purchase’s jazz studies program, where she fell deeply in love with the music.

Though she's young, she relishes the process of digging through the music's history. "I think maybe people connect with the fact that I'm not faking it, that I already feel embedded in it," Samara says. "Maybe I'm able to reach people in person and on social media because it's real." The gatekeepers of the jazz world tend to agree: in 2019, she won the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, and she's since performed with legends like Christian McBride and Bill Charlap. Legendary late pianist Barry Harris was a particularly important influence and mentor. "You inspired me as well as many others with this fire for teaching and playing that couldn't be dimmed by anything or anyone," Samara writes in *Linger Awhile's* liner notes, dedicating the project in part to Harris' memory. [Read Samara Joy's full bio here.](#)

About the McLendon Family

While the family has a long musical history, their most recent recording together was released at the end of 2022 — just before Ms. Joy won two GRAMMY Awards at the 65th Annual ceremony.

The holiday single titled, "*O Holy Night (feat. The McLendon Family)*" features Joy's:

- Grandfather Elder Goldwire McLendon — a 92-year-old gospel singer who led the well-known Philadelphia-based The Savettes.
- Father Antonio McLendon — a gifted bassist and vocalist who toured with the renowned Andraé Crouch.
- Uncle Laurone McLendon
- Cousins Tiera Lovell Rowe and Alana Alexander

The track, which was recorded by Christopher Allen and produced by Matt Pierson, also features Sullivan Fortner on Hammond B3. Listen to "*O Holy Night (feat. The McLendon Family)*" [here.](#)

For tickets and interview requests regarding The Soraya's Dec. 2023 concert, please contact:

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- [ACCESS YOUR PRESS KIT HERE](#)

For questions or ticket information, visit www.TheSoraya.org or call the Ticket Office at (818) 677-3000. Office hours are 11a-4p, Tuesday through Saturday.

About the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)

The Soraya's 2023-24 Season boldly advances the best of The Soraya—the immersive sound of big orchestras; the free flow of jazz; a dizzying array of dance; new works alongside the tried and true, and a cultural bounty drawn from the well of world traditions.

The Soraya continues its vigorous commitment to innovating, excelling, and amplifying access by offering a wide variety of performances that reflect LA's many distinctive communities and featuring new and original work from the Los Angeles region as well as artists from around the world.

Located on the vibrant and diverse campus of California State University, Northridge in the heart of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, The Soraya and the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication share an integral link that enhances student opportunities in the arts and performing arts. Together, The Soraya and the Mike Curb College are creating pathways to nurture future artists and elevate their academic pursuits and talents.

For Calendar Listing

What: **Samara Joy**
 A Joyful Holiday
 featuring The McLendon Family
 Great Hall

Samara Joy returns to The Soraya for an all-new soulful holiday concert following her sold-out Soraya debut in the 2023 Jazz at Naz Festival. With her effortless grace and style, the 23-year-old GRAMMY Award winner for Best New Artist and Best Jazz Vocal Album combines her eclectic musical influences with her experiences growing up in a family whose gospel, Motown, and jazz legacy reaches back several generations. This winter, she takes the stage with members of her multi-talented musical family including her father, uncle, and cousins, to deliver a sparkling evening brimming with the most time-honored songs of the season.

When: Thu, Dec 7, 2023 | 8pm

Tickets: \$39-89

Where: Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)
 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330

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