

**Swinging Jazz Series 2017/18*****Maceo Parker Pays Tribute to the Incomparable Ray Charles in  
To Ray with Love*****A tribute to Ray Charles, the Ray Charles Orchestra and the Raelettes****Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at 8:00pm**

(Los Angeles, CA) Sept xx, 2017 – The 2017/18 Swinging Jazz series at VPAC (aka. The Soraya) kicks off when American funk maestro Maceo Parker takes to the stage for an unforgettable tribute to the great Ray Charles.

In the fall of 1963, Parker was standing out the back of The Coliseum in Greensboro, North Carolina waiting to catch a glimpse of anyone from the band after a very special concert. After only seeing strangers, the band eventually spilled out followed, finally, by the great man himself, Ray Charles. The awestruck young saxophonist muttered to himself *'One of these days you're all gonna know me!'* Now, over half a century later, Parker brings it full circle as he performs a tribute to Ray Charles.

'Maceo Parker's *To Ray with Love* is the perfect start to The Soraya's Swinging Jazz series,' said Thor Steingraber, Executive Director of the VPAC. 'Parker is the first of several American jazz, and indeed the first funk masters who will grace our stage this year.'

For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit [ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org](http://ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org) or call (818) 677-3000.

**About *To Ray with Love*, starring Maceo Parker**

Maceo Parker is one of the founding fathers of funk and Charles' music has remained an undeniable influence throughout his career. Maceo has included a Ray Charles cover on each one of his albums and in 1993/94 the two icons toured with Parker serving as the opening act for one of his idols.

Ray Charles pioneered soul music by combining gospel's fervor with the secular lyrics and narratives of blues and country along with the big band elements of jazz and the rhythms and improvisational opportunities that they all offered. His music was both sophisticated and spontaneous, and over the course of his 50-year career he penned dozens of hits including "Unchain My Heart," "Hit the Road Jack" and "Georgia on My Mind."

Parker said that "Ray really lived what he was singing, that soul thing. And that's what I try to do with my playing – get close to that. But whoa, I never dreamed that I'd work with his band." In an article with *Billboard*, Maceo calls performing with the tribute "a dream come true."

*To Ray with Love* is part of VPAC's (The Soraya) jazz programming which includes Miles Electric band (March 1), The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra (April 5), Cécile McLorin Salvant (April 18 & 19), and Terence Blanchard *Breathless* featuring the E-Collective (May 1 & 2).

### **About Maceo Parker**

Maceo Parker is perhaps best known for his work with James Brown, who he performed with for almost two decades. Parker's signature style helped define James Brown's brand of funk. "Maceo, I want you to blow!" goes the well-known cue for Parker to blast his unique sound into the show, a sound that has seen Maceo become the world's most sampled musician.

In the mid '70's Maceo hooked up with George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic. From the breathtaking shows of James Brown to the landing of the Mothership, Maceo has been stamping his mark on some of the most exciting and memorable moments in musical history. Parker's work with George Clinton led him to play on the Red Hot Chili Peppers' sophomore album, *Freaky Styley*, and he has since worked with other reputable artists including Ani DiFranco, James Taylor, De La Soul and Dave Matthews Band. From 1999 Maceo also toured extensively with Prince.

In July of 2012 Maceo was presented with Les Victoires du Jazz in Paris: a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to music. The same weekend he was presented with an Icon Award at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Rotterdam. He received the North Carolina National Heritage Award from his home state in May 2016.

### **Calendar Listing for *To Ray with Love***

**Date:** Thursday, October 18 at 8:00pm  
**Prices:** Starting at \$33. Prices subject to change.

**Venue:** Valley Performing Arts Center  
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330

**Tickets:** **By Phone:** (818) 677-3000  
**Online:** [ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org](http://ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org)

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**About Valley Performing Arts Center (The Soraya)** -- Launching its seventh season in September, the mission of the Valley Performing Arts Center (The Soraya) is to present a wide variety of performances that not only includes new and original work from the Los Angeles region but also work from around the world that appeal to all of LA's rich and diverse communities. VPAC's 2017-18 season signals a new era for the premier event venue. Under the leadership of Executive Director Thor Steingraber, the renamed Younes and Soraya Nazarian Performing Arts Center (The Soraya) expands its programming and outstanding multidisciplinary performances. Located on the campus of California State University, Northridge, The Soraya's season offers a vibrant performance program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family and international events that will serve to establish The Soraya as the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley, and further establish itself as one of the top arts companies in Southern California. The award-winning, 1,700-seat theatre was designed by HGA Architects and Engineers and was recently cited by the Los Angeles Times as "a growing hub for live music, dance, drama and other cultural events."