



BRUCE IN THE USA
HOWIE MANDEL
ON & ON: JOSÉ JAMES
SINGS BADU
DANIELA PADRÓN
PINK MARTINI FEATURING
CHINA FORBES

PROGRAM



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FOR THE ARTS



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The arts celebrate culture and enrich our lives. A vibrant arts community is a key indicator of a thriving economy. That's why SRP is proud to support organizations like the Chandler Center for the Arts that are committed to unifying our region through creativity, innovation and shared experiences that connect us all.

srp.net/arts



CHANDLER CULTURAL FOUNDATION

Dynamic leaders, loyal supporters and visionaries describe the Board members of Chandler Cultural Foundation. The Chandler Cultural Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation established in 1989 to program and raise funds for the Center's artistic and outreach programs. Ticket sales and other earned income cover only part of the Center's programming expenses, which means that the Chandler Cultural Foundation's fundraising efforts play a vital role in delivering quality arts programs at an affordable cost to the public.

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WELCOME TO THE CHANDLER CENTER FOR THE ARTS!



On behalf of the staff and volunteers of the CCA, welcome to Chandler Center for the Arts. Thank you for joining us for our 34th Season!

It is an honor to serve you in Downtown Chandler's premier arts and entertainment destination.

It is our commitment to create

an experience that is welcoming for everyone. If you have feedback about your experience while you are here, please share that with me or a member of our staff.

In addition to the diverse range of artists and genres that make up this year's season, we are very proud to present two musical theatre productions on the Steena Murray Mainstage. *North: The Musical* (Feb 23-24, 2024) features an original score filled with jazz and Black roots music and an uplifting story set against the backdrop of the Underground Railroad. Created by composer, musician, and vocalist Ashli St. Armant and co-commissioned by Chandler Center for the Arts, *North: The Musical* will make its return as part of its national tour. Be our guest at *Disney's Beauty and the Beast: Live in Concert* (Mar 23-24, 2024), a vibrant concert version of the Disney Broadway show with an orchestra and chorus on stage, accompanying a costumed cast and dazzling animated scenery.

We could not present an outstanding season like this one without the incredible support through your ticket purchase, membership, or donation. Your support enables us to provide free arts experiences to over 15,000 families, seniors, and veterans each year. If you want to do more, visit chandlercenter.org/donate and consider a deeper investment in your local arts center.

Let us dim the house lights, turn up the stage lights and forget the world outside. It is showtime!

With gratitude,

Michelle MacLennan

General Manager, Chandler Center for the Arts

Michelle MacLennan

2023/24 SEASON

OUR IMPACT

In the **2022-2023 SEASON**, the Chandler Center for the Arts had the following impact on our community.

50 cultural and nonprofit organizations used the CCA for their performances, recitals, and events

3,099 creative workers engaged

215 volunteers donated **8,700** hours of their time to the CCA

7,000 young people were reached with performing and visual arts programs through Connecting Kids

160,530 patrons experienced the arts through diverse programming, of those individuals, **15,500** attended **FREE** programs



WELCOME TO CHANDLER CENTER FOR THE ARTS!

On behalf of the City of Chandler, thank you for choosing Chandler Center for the Arts. With so many unique and vibrant entertainment options, I am confident you will have an exceptional experience.

Chandler Center for the Arts is an integral part of Chandler. The diversity and dynamic energy that makes up our unique community are showcased and celebrated beautifully through a variety of artistic performances at the Center. They offer a range of entertainment from all categories, the 2023-2024 Season includes La Marisoul (acclaimed lead singer of GRAMMY®-winning band La Santa Cecilia), Clint Black (country music icon), and Howie Mandel (comedy legend and judge from *America's Got Talent*) just to name a few.

With outstanding customer service, some of the best entertainment in the Valley, and Chandler's bustling and lively Downtown, you are sure to have an unforgettable experience.

Enjoy the performance, we look forward to seeing you again soon.

Mayor Kevin Hartke
City of Chandler



CHANDLER CITY COUNCIL

Front row, from left: Councilmember Jane Poston, Councilmember Angel Encinas, Councilmember Matt Orlando, Councilmember Christine Ellis. **Back row, from left:** Councilmember OD Harris, Mayor Kevin Hartke, Councilmember Mark Stewart.



CHANDLER CULTURAL FOUNDATION

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Chandler Center for the Arts serves as a leader and one of the most collaborative multi-theatre performing and visual arts facilities in the country. Through a partnership between the City of Chandler, the nonprofit Chandler Cultural Foundation and Chandler Unified School District, the Chandler Center for the Arts is the central space for Chandler's cultural activities. Serving a diverse community comprised of many ages, backgrounds and interests, the Center presents outstanding performances, exhibitions and events for the public each weekend, while providing a state-of-the-art facility for Chandler's students to use for their arts curriculum and school performances during the week.

The Chandler Cultural Foundation, which was formed upon the Center's opening in 1989, oversees all artistic programming and operations, and provides fiscal oversight for the Chandler Center for the Arts on behalf of the city.

The Chandler Cultural Foundation is comprised of 15 board members; all of whom are appointed by the Mayor. The members review and approve proposed management policies of the CCA, as well as review the budgets of the CCA's operating and endowment funds.

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Jerry Brooks Legacy Society

Mayor of Chandler from 1984-1988, Jerry Brooks was a visionary leader, dedicated to the cultural life of Chandler. In his honor, the Chandler Cultural Foundation established the Jerry Brooks Legacy Society. Those who give to the Legacy Society are dedicated to ensuring a lasting foundation of support for Chandler Center for the Arts, in keeping with Jerry's vision for a strong cultural center for Chandler and its residents.

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Chandler Center for the Arts Members are an important group of individuals who, through their support, help provide performances and visual arts to more than 210,000 people, in addition to vital education programs for Chandler's youth.

You can become a member for as little as \$50 per year, with increasing levels of benefits and perks according to your level of giving.

MEMBER BENEFITS INCLUDE:

Exclusive Advance Presales

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Visit chandlercenter.org/member or call 480-782-2680

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BRUCE IN THE USA



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2023 | 7:30 P.M.

*"The most powerful and intense Springsteen tribute on the planet."
- Legends In Concert LV*

Much more than just another tribute...**Bruce In The USA** is a high-energy, note-perfect, and visually accurate musical experience of a Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band show.

To millions of die-hard fans around the world, it's Springsteen's marathon, party-like performances that have elevated him to hero status. Bruce's legendary concerts (in the largest arenas) sell-out within hours of their announced sale. For those even lucky enough to get a ticket, there was nothing that could fill the aching void in between Bruce's long-awaited tours...until now!

The Bruce In The USA show was born on the Las Vegas Strip in the winter of 2004, with its debut at Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino, in the majestic "V Theatre." The show assaulted the senses in a fun-filled and exciting party atmosphere on the Vegas Strip, while suspending disbelief for even the toughest skeptics. They've been met with critical acclaim, from the Stone Pony, large theaters, and performing arts centers across the country, as well as corporate

events spanning across the globe for over a decade. Sellout crowds are on their feet from the first song to the last.

About Matt Ryan

Matt Ryan, from the World Famous "Legends In Concert" cast, began playing the Springsteen character in 2000, in Legends' "full scale" Las Vegas show. The great success in the famous Las Vegas show brought him to performances across the world, eventually evolving his character into the Bruce In The USA show.

The Bruce In The USA Band consists of seasoned world-class professional musicians. The show has hosted musicians from such acts/bands as Queen/Paul Rogers, Meatloaf, Blue Oyster Cult, Hall and Oats, Joe Cocker, The Ojays, Aretha Franklin, David Cassidy, The Temptations, Slash... and so many more.

This high-end powerhouse band has taken this genre of performance art to a whole new level, making it the World's #1 Tribute to the E Street Band's musical legacy.

HOWIE MANDEL



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2023 | 7:00 P.M.

Howie Mandel has remained a constant force in show business for more than 30 years. He can currently be seen on NBC's flagship series *America's Got Talent* where he has served as a judge for eleven seasons. He recently finished production on his new documentary *Howie Mandel: But Enough About Me*. Other recent projects include judging NBC's *America's Got Talent: The Champions*, CNBC's *Deal or No Deal* where he served as executive producer and host, and Nat Geo Wild's *Animals Doing Things* where he co-hosted with his son Alex. He also executive produced the Quibi series *Kirby Jenner*. In 2019, he released his first solo special in 20 years *Howie Mandel Presents Howie Mandel at the Howie Mandel Comedy Club*.

In 2020 Howie teamed up with ePlay Digital Inc. and launched the charity, Breakout the Masks, and mobile game campaign to give back to those involved in the fight against COVID-19. Via Howie's Games, the first challenge is Outbreak where players' points translate to donations of N95 face masks, portable ventilators, gloves and other personal protective equipment to doctors, nurses, and other front-line workers. The second game, SwishAR, has users looking for *America's Got Talent's* Howie Mandel to join in a backyard basketball game to shoot hoops. Both games are available on the Apple App store and Google Play.

His additional projects as a host, actor, and executive producer include *Take It All* and *Howie Do It* for NBC, *Deal With It* for TBS, and *Mobbed* for FOX. Previously, Mandel received an Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Host for a Reality or Reality-Competition Program for *Deal or No Deal* and a Daytime Emmy nomination for Outstanding Game Show Host for the syndicated version of the show.

Mandel's versatile career has encompassed virtually all aspects of the entertainment spectrum, including television, film, and stage. From his work on the Emmy Award-winning *St. Elsewhere*, to the international animated children's series *Bobby's World*, Mandel has become a mainstay of the American comedy scene.

In 2009, Mandel added author to his resume when he released his frank, funny and no-holds-barred memoir, "Here's the Deal: Don't Touch Me." The memoir revealed his ongoing struggle with OCD and ADHD, and how it has shaped his life and career. It made *The New York Times* bestseller list on its first week and remained on the list for several consecutive weeks. Mandel has done countless comedy specials both on cable and network television. He has also hosted his own syndicated talk show, *The Howie Mandel Show* and continues to be a mainstay on the talk show circuit. He also continues to perform as many as 200 stand-up comedy shows each year throughout the U.S. and Canada.



**CHANDLER
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FOR THE ARTS

**2023/
2024**

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**New Year's Eve
Celebration: Best
of Broadway**
12/31/23

**The Righteous
Brothers: Bill
Medley & Bucky
Heard**
1/20/24

**Take It Easy:
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1/21/24

**The Peking
Acrobats**
2/4/24

**La Marisoul
& The
Love Notes
Orchestra**
2/17/24

Country Gals
2/18/24

**NORTH: The
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2/23/24 -
2/24/24

**The World-
Famous
Glenn Miller
Orchestra**
2/25/24

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3/3/24

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3/9/24

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The Ultimate
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3/15/24

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BEAUTY AND
THE BEAST:**
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3/22/24 -
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4/7/24

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- *The East Valley Tribune*

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- *The Arizona Republic*



Chandler Center for the Arts

Box Office: 480.782.2680
chandlercenter.org
Tickets*: \$30, \$35

11/24 at 7:00 pm
11/25 at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm
11/26 at 3:00 pm
12/1 at 7:00 pm
12/2 at 1:00 pm and 4:30 pm
12/3 at 3:00 pm

**Base price. Venue fees apply.*

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Box Office: 480.644.6500
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Tickets**: \$30, \$35

12/9 at 1:00 pm and 4:30 pm
12/10 at 3:00 pm
12/16 at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm
12/17 at 3:00 pm

***Base price. Venue adds fee*

balletetudes.net | Sharon Seder Meko - Founding Artistic Director

*Ballet Etudes is supported in part by the Arizona Commission on the Arts,
which receives support from the State of Arizona and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

ON & ON: JOSÉ JAMES SINGS BADU



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2023 | 7:30 P.M.

José James artfully blurs the lines between traditional and contemporary jazz, hip-hop, soul, funk, pop and rock. He has released 11 critically-acclaimed albums in as many years for labels such as Brownswood, Impulse, Blue Note and his own co-founded Rainbow Blonde Records. He is the recipient of both the Edison Award and L'Académie du Jazz Grand Prix. James has collaborated with many notable artists such as Flying Lotus, Robert Glasper, Lalah Hathaway, Ledisi, Aloe Blacc and Jason Moran.

A celebrated international performer, James has presented his work at venues such as The Kennedy Center, Hollywood Bowl, Ancienne Belgique and Billboard Live Tokyo, and has performed as a guest artist with McCoy Tyner, Laura Mvula and the Jazz at Lincoln Center, Melbourne Symphony, and Ryal Concertgebouw Orchestras.

When José James released *No Beginning No End 2* (2020), a collaborative effort that paired the forward-looking vocalist with a global all-star cast including Ledisi, Aloe Blacc, and Laura Mvula, it was apparent that the genre-defying artist was back to stake his claim as the jazz singer for the hip-hop generation. In that light, his new project *On & On: José James Sings Badu* finds James throwing down the gauntlet on the past 100 years of jazz singing while charting a path forward for the culture.

"It's simple," James explains. "Jazz singing has always been about interpreting the highest level of standards of your time. And for my

generation, Erykah Badu has been one of the most innovative and incisive songwriters. Her work has proven to be groundbreaking in a social, musical and artistic sense."

The album, produced by James with contributions from like-minded musicians Big Yuki (A Tribe Called Quest), Ben Williams (Kamasi Washington), and Jharis Yokley (My Brightest Diamond) investigates the breadth of Badu's iconic catalog, from her groundbreaking debut album *Baduizm* to her contemporary masterpieces *New Amerykah Pt. One* and *Two*.

But make no mistake: this is thoroughly a jazz album. Conceived in the spirit of Herbie Hancock's *River: The Joni Letters*, James artfully draws upon his experiences with modern masters McCoy Tyner, Robert Glasper, and Flying Lotus to create a new sonic landscape through an improvisatory lens.

James also builds on his reputation as a modern jazz tastemaker by introducing featured horn players Ebban Dorsey and Diana Dzhabbar. "As an artist and performer Badu has consistently created opportunities for young artists both on and off her stage," James explains. "It only made sense to include the next generation."

"James skirts categories with ease, fitting in with current R&B innovators like Frank Ocean or Miguel...he holistically heals the rift between radio-friendly songcraft and virtuoso flair."

- NPR Music

DANIELA PADRÓN AROUND THE WORLD



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2023 | 7:00 P.M.

Daniela Padrón is a Venezuelan-American violinist from Caracas, based in Miami, Florida since 2012. She began her musical journey at the age of three at the Escuela Experimental de Música Manuel Alberto López in Caracas, Venezuela. She was granted a scholarship by the nonprofit organization Fundación Mozarteum to pursue further studies with renowned French violinist Virginie Robillard. In 2005, she obtained her Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance under the guidance of Maestros Jose Elias Zapata, Ma. Fernanda Montero, and Virginie Robillard.

In 2000, Daniela attended the Meadowmount School of Music Summer Academy in New York, where she had the privilege of receiving instruction from renowned Sally Thomas of The Juilliard School. She achieved top honors in the “Escuela de Música Olga López” Violin Competition and the Maurice Hasson National Violin Competition in Venezuela in both 2001 and 2003.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Universidad Metropolitana (Caracas, Venezuela, 2009) and a Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance from Escuela Experimental de Música Manuel Alberto López (Caracas, Venezuela, 2005).

Since 2009, Daniela has been an integral part of the world music band Gaêlica, performing in various venues across the Americas. Gaêlica’s outstanding work led to a nomination for the Latin GRAMMY® Awards 2013 in the Folk Album category. Additionally, Daniela has collaborated as a guest violinist with renowned artists such as Willie Colón, Rosario y Lolita Flores, Soledad Bravo, Aymée Nuviola, Frank Quintero, and César Muñoz.

Daniela’s musical career includes several notable releases, including her first solo

album *Bach to Venezuela* in 2016. In 2018, she collaborated with her mother, the renowned pianist Olga López, to release the duet album *LATAM* featuring works by Latin American academic composers. Daniela’s 2020 release *+58* is a compilation of pieces that embody the lively, dynamic, and unpredictable nature of Venezuelan folk music. In 2022, Daniela teamed up with Cuban pianist Glenda Del E to release *Ella*, an album featuring works by Latin American women composers that was nominated for the Latin GRAMMYS® in the Best Instrumental Album category and for the Pepsi Music Awards in the Classical Music category. Daniela’s latest production, *Sola* (2023), marks her debut as a composer and features music composed and arranged for solo violin.

Daniela Padrón has showcased her talent in numerous cities across the United States and Latin America, performing at prestigious venues such as the Adrienne Arsht Center, New World Center, James L Knight Center and Marlins Park in Miami. She has also graced stages in Orlando, Atlanta, Houston, Dallas, Anaheim, Denver, Phoenix, Monterrey, Panama City, Caracas, Barquisimeto, Mérida and Maracaibo.

In 2023 she signed a publishing deal with Peermusic, the largest independent music publisher in the world.

From 2012 to 2022, Daniela Padrón dedicated ten years to being a teaching artist at the Miami Music Project, an organization that utilizes music for social change. During that time, she also served as an Orchestra Conductor for one of their children’s orchestras. Presently, she manages her own violin studio with students from both local and international backgrounds and takes pride in being a mentor for the Recording Academy’s GRAMMY® U program.



Maestro Antulio Mora, a renowned Venezuelan pianist and musician, has an impressive background in classical music and is a graduate of the José Angel Lamas Conservatory in Caracas. His

versatility allows him to excel in various genres including jazz, Latin jazz, pop, rock, folkloric Latin American music, tango, reggae, gospel music, and salsa. In Venezuela, he has collaborated with notable artists such as Isabel Pantoja, Chucho Avellanet, Soledad Bravo, and Yordano. He was also the pianist for the band Los Melódicos for two years. Antulio has performed in numerous venues across Latin American countries and internationally in places like the Teatro Teresa Carreño in Caracas and Luna Park in Buenos Aires. He has also showcased his talent in countries like the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, and the United Arab Emirates. In 2000, Antulio moved to Miami, Florida to further expand his musical horizons and collaborate with well-known artists.

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Tons of Tinsel Tour

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2023 | 7:30 P.M.

PINK MARTINI

In 1994 in his hometown of Portland, Oregon, **Thomas Lauderdale** was working in politics, thinking that one day he would run for mayor. Like other eager politicians-in-training, he went to every political fundraiser under the sun, but was dismayed to find the music at these events underwhelming, lackluster, loud and un-neighborly. Drawing inspiration from music from all over the world – crossing genres of classical, jazz and old-fashioned pop – and hoping to appeal to conservatives and liberals alike, he founded the “little orchestra” Pink Martini in 1994 to provide more beautiful and inclusive musical soundtracks for political fundraisers for causes, such as civil rights, affordable housing, the environment, libraries, public broadcasting, education and parks.

One year later, Lauderdale called **China Forbes**, a Harvard classmate who was living in New York City, and asked her to join Pink Martini. They began to write songs together. Their first song “Sympathique (*Je ne veux pas travailler*)” became an overnight sensation in France, was nominated for “Song of the Year” at France’s Victoires de la Musique Awards, and to this day remains a mantra (“*Je ne veux pas travailler*” or “I don’t want to work”) for striking French workers. Says Lauderdale, “We’re very much an American band, but we spend a lot of time abroad and therefore have the incredible diplomatic opportunity to represent a broader, more inclusive America... the America which remains the most heterogeneously populated country in the world...composed of people of every country, every language, every religion.”

Featuring a dozen musicians, with songs in 25 languages, Pink Martini performs its multilingual repertoire on concert stages in six continents. After making its European debut at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 and its orchestral debut with the Oregon Symphony in 1998, the band has gone on to play with more than 50 orchestras around the world, including multiple engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, the Boston Pops, the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, the San Francisco Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the BBC Concert Orchestra at Royal Albert Hall in London. In 2014, Pink Martini was inducted into both the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame and the Oregon Music Hall of Fame.

Pink Martini has released 11 studio albums on its own independent label Heinz Records (named after Lauderdale’s dog), selling over three million albums worldwide. In 2019, the band released two EPs featuring the vocals of Pink Martini’s newest members Jimmie Herrod and Edna Vazquez. Both vocalists have toured with the band for the past year and are officially part of the group with the release of Herrod’s EP *Tomorrow* and Vazquez’s *Besame Mucho*, both of which were co-produced by Thomas Lauderdale and China Forbes.

“Pink Martini is a rollicking around-the-world musical adventure... if the United Nations had a house band in 1962, hopefully we’d be that band.”

– Thomas Lauderdale, bandleader/pianist



China Forbes

China Forbes was born and raised in Cambridge, Massachusetts where she graduated cum laude from Harvard and was awarded the Jonathan Levy Prize for “most promising actor.” She headed to New York City and appeared in regional theatre and off-Broadway productions, also fronting her first band in numerous NYC clubs. Her solo album “Love Handle” was released in 1995 and she was chosen to sing “Ordinary Girl,” the theme song to the TV show *Clueless*.

It was that same year Harvard classmate Thomas Lauderdale invited her to sing with Pink Martini, and she has since written many of the band’s most beloved songs with Lauderdale, including “Sympathique,” “Lilly,” “Clementine,” “Let’s Never Stop Falling in Love,” and “Over the Valley” to name a few. Her original song “Hey Eugene” is the title track of Pink Martini’s third album and many of her songs can also be heard on television and film. She sang “Qué Será Será” over the credits of Jane Campion’s film *In the Cut* and her song “The Northern Line” appears at the

end of sister Maya Forbes’ directorial debut *Infinitely Polar Bear* (Sony Pictures Classics). Both films star Mark Ruffalo by coincidence.

With Pink Martini, China has appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, *Late Night with Conan O’Brien*, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Later...with Jools Holland*. She has performed songs in over 20 languages and has sung duets with Rufus Wainwright, Michael Feinstein, Carol Channing and many other wonderful artists. She has performed in venues from Carnegie Hall to Red Rocks, the Hollywood Bowl to Paris’s l’Olympia and Sydney Opera House. China also performs Opera recitals annually with members of the Oregon Symphony in its free community outreach program, “Classical Up Close.” Her second solo album “78 came out on Heinz Records in 2008, a collection of autobiographical folk-rock songs.

China is currently at work on another solo album of original material, as well as preparing her first solo concert with a symphony orchestra.



Thomas M. Lauderdale

Raised on a plant nursery in rural Indiana, Pink Martini bandleader Thomas M. Lauderdale began piano lessons at age six with Patricia Garrison. When his family moved to Portland in 1982, he began studying with Sylvia Killman, who to this day continues to serve as his coach and mentor. He has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras and ensembles, including the Oregon Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, Portland Youth Philharmonic, Chamber Music Northwest, and several collaborations with Oregon Ballet Theatre. In 2008, he played Gershwin’s *Piano Concerto in F* with the Oregon Symphony under the direction of Christoph Campestrini.

Active in Oregon politics since a student at U.S. Grant High School (where he was student body president), Thomas has served under Portland Mayor Bud Clark and Oregon governor Neil Goldschmidt. In 1991, he worked under Portland City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury on the drafting and passage of the city’s civil rights ordinance. He graduated with

honors from Harvard with a degree in History and Literature in 1992. He spent most of his collegiate years, however, in cocktail dresses, taking on the role of “cruise director” ... throwing waltzes with live orchestras and ice sculptures, disco masquerades with gigantic pineapples on wheels, midnight swimming parties, and operating a Tuesday night coffeehouse called Café Mardi.

Instead of running for political office, Lauderdale founded Pink Martini in 1994 to play political fundraisers. In addition to his work with Pink Martini, Lauderdale has most recently completed two long awaited collaborations with dear friends. In 2018 he completed *Love for Sale*, an album of jazz standards with singer/civil rights leader Kathleen Saadat, that began as a gift to a few friends and ended up being a *Billboard* Jazz charts-ranking album the month it was released.

In 2019, Thomas Lauderdale and members of Pink Martini collaborated on a new release with the international singing sensation Meow Meow. The album *Hotel Amour* – the culmination of almost a decade of work – features guest appearances by Rufus Wainwright, The von Trapps, Barry Humphries (of Dame Edna fame), and the inimitable late French pianist and composer Michel Legrand.

Lauderdale currently serves on the boards of the Oregon Symphony, Pioneer Courthouse Square, the Oregon Historical Society, Confluence Project with Maya Lin, and the Derek Rieth Foundation.

ARTIST Q & A



Thomas Lauderdale of Pink Martini

CCA Staff: How did Pink Martini come to be?

+I was working in politics when I got back to town from Harvard. I really wanted to become Mayor of Portland. And there was a very nasty attempt to amend the Oregon State Constitution to illegalize homosexuality in the state of Oregon. So, I was on the campaign in opposition to Measure 13 in 1994. I had just seen *Pee-wee Herman's Christmas Special*, which has 25 different stars in it in 45 minutes: k.d. Lang, Dinah Shore, Little Richard, Magic Johnson, Annette Funicello, Frankie Avalon, Cher, Charo, Grace Jones, and The Del Rubio Triplets – three gals, three guitarists, who were somewhere between the ages of 70 and 80. They wore little mini-skirts, little booties, and they looked exactly alike – big hair. And they played guitar and warbled covers of “Walk Like an Egyptian” and “Whip It.”

So, I decided that I should bring them to town to do a series of mini concerts in retirement homes and nursing homes and hospitals and rotary meetings. And, then at the end of the set, they would say, “Vote No on Measure 13.” At the end of the week, we had a big community concert at a local theatre, and I needed an opening act. I was trying to get a hold of a surf

band called Satan's Pilgrims- this amazing, gorgeous group with whom I just released the LONG-shelved collaboration album *Thomas Lauderdale Meets the Pilgrims*. But back in 1994, they weren't answering my call for a main act, so I threw on a cocktail dress and started Pink Martini.

Pink Martini—such as it was back then- was just going to be a once or twice thing, but pretty soon thereafter we became kind of like a house band for parties for progressive causes – affordable housing, public broadcasting, libraries, music education, civil rights, the environment. And if there was a benefit for you-name-it, we probably played it. The first four or five years we never travelled beyond the Portland city limits. And then we made our first record, *Sympathique*, with the song “Je ne veux pas travailler,” which crazily, and much to our surprise, caught on in France and became a big hit. So, we developed a career in Europe before we ever really had one in the U.S.

Pee-wee Herman's Christmas Special was the biggest inspiration for that first variety show concert. So, if it wasn't for Paul Rueben—and a nasty anti-gay-rights initiative in Oregon in 1994—the band would not exist!

How would you describe the music of Pink Martini?

As you may know, that's not an easy task! We have so many inspirations and influences, so many musicians! We sing in 25 languages and blend a lot of musical styles. We've been called a “genre-defying little orchestra,” and I like that better than any one type of band. What we strive to do is represent is all of these different components that make a more beautiful, inclusive America and world and a more beautiful and inclusive sound. Our “little orchestra” is made up of a diverse group of people with different musical educational training, genres, and styles that all come together and blend and contribute different parts to make the sound of Pink Martini, much like the different people make the culture and fabric of America. I think there's a diplomatic, ambassadorial element to the band. I still think the band has this great impact of appealing to fans who like different kinds of music, people who are very different from each other. We've got very conservative fans, very liberal fans, very young fans and older fans. And because there are so few places where people cross-pollinate, at least in this country, our music brings together people who normally wouldn't stand next to each other. And that's one of the very best elements of the band. I think the music's really beautiful, but actually what's more beautiful to me is just looking at the insane cross-section of people that are in the audience.

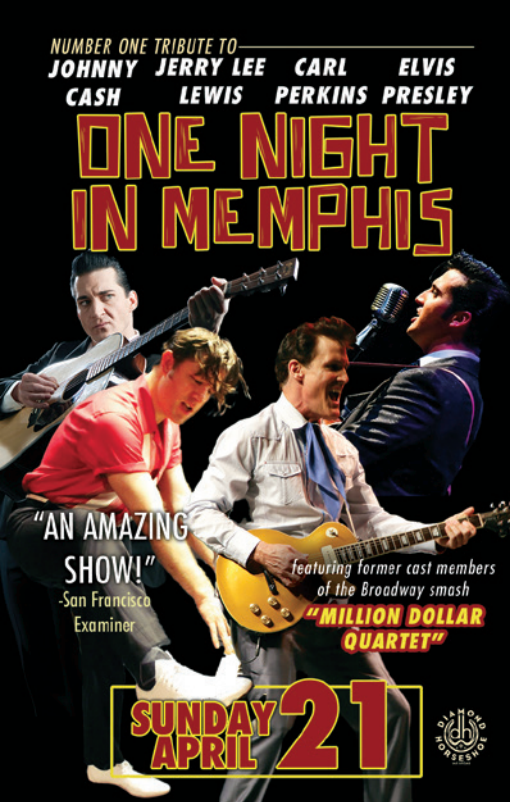
2023 is Pink Martini's 29th year! Is there anything exciting coming up for you all?

Well, hopefully in the next year we will have another studio album! Both China Forbes and Edna Vazquez are also working on releasing solo projects this next year. And of course, there is always touring. After 29 years, it is truly amazing that we

have the band that we have and that it is as wonderful as ever, and at least for me, is as fun as ever. And I think the band sounds so great these days and I'm just impressed with how great each of our band members are as people and as musicians!

What albums or songs are you most proud of recently?

One of the albums I've been obsessed with this year is an album we just released on Heinz records—Pink Martini's boutique label I started with our first album. It's called *Thomas Lauderdale Meets the Pilgrims* and it's the result of a long-shelved collaboration project with the iconic Portland surf music band Satan's Pilgrims. I should say there is absolutely nothing satanic about them, they are the nicest guys in the world, and incredible musicians! I met them in Portland almost 30 years ago and was instantly mesmerized by their sound and stage presence and desperate to make music with them. I thought “how can I make this happen?” and decided that a surf-rock version of “Rhapsody in Blue”—one of my absolute favorite pieces of music—would be perfect. We began recording it in 1996, around the same time as *Sympathique*. That album got finished first and Pink Martini's career sort of took off and that was it with the Pilgrims for over a decade. Then we went back into the studio in 2011 and recorded a few more songs, and then again left it for another decade. Then when we are all on hiatus from touring during the pandemic, I decided to dust it off and work on it. It took another year but the album came out this summer and I'm thrilled with how it turned out. We had the Pilgrims on tour with us this summer and it was really fun to introduce Pink Martini audiences to a new sound and genre of music as well.



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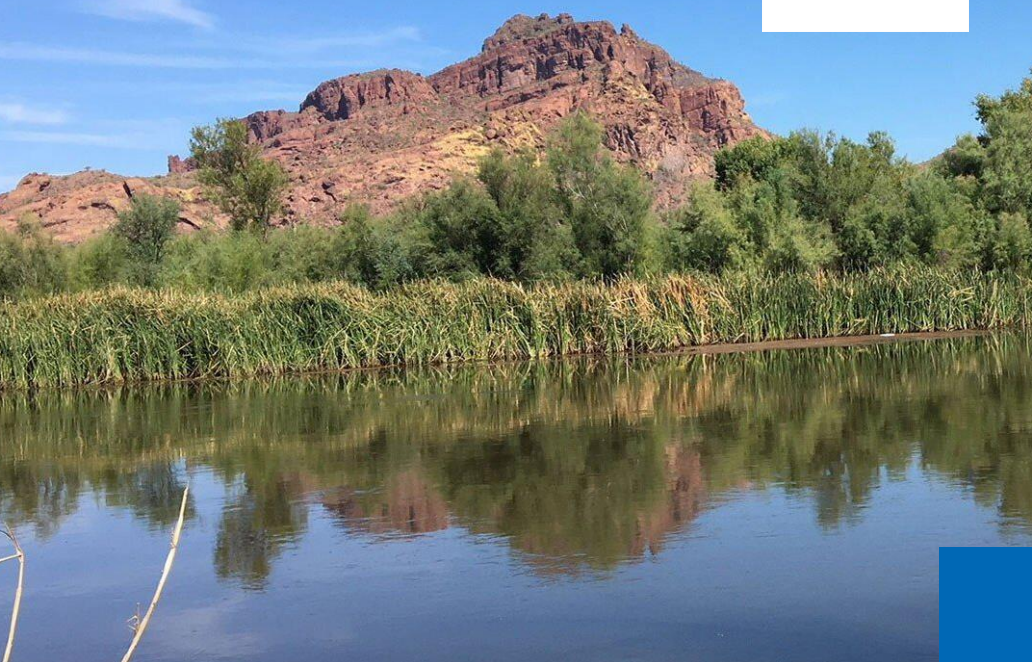
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