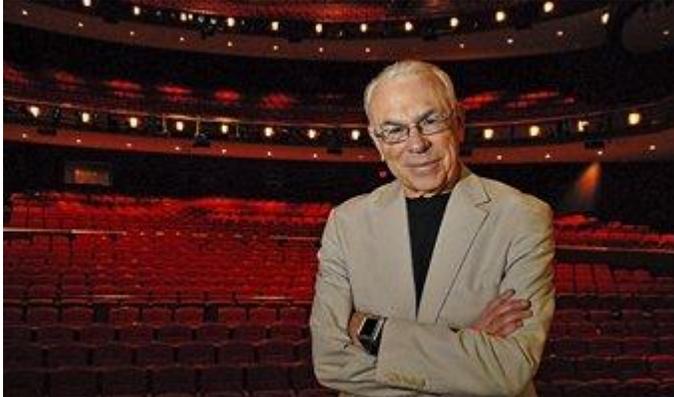


Jazz Roots: Longtime music executive brings signature program to Cobb

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Grammy winners and jazz legends will headline "Jazz Roots: A Larry Rosen Jazz Series" beginning Sept. 21. Presented by the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre Foundation, this series will merge the beauty of jazz with an educational focus.

Larry Rosen is the creator and producer of the jazz series, which originated in 2008 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. The Grammy-winning producer said Miami didn't have a strong market for jazz, even with its racial diversity. The challenge was to create a jazz series for a nontraditional jazz audience and to create a brand "Jazz Roots."

"The music of America came from the roots of Africa. Those links to the drums and the call and response — everything about the spiritual nature of music and dance came that from Africa really became the music that became the basis for all the music of America," Rosen said.

In addition to the music, the development of the program involved educational and thematic components. The first season sold out, something Rosen said is attributed to the program's connection to the community.

"It worked, and it's going into its fifth year in Miami. It's been tremendously successful," he said.

Rosen said performing arts centers focus on education, arts and community, and the Cobb Energy Centre was a good fit for this program in Atlanta. A partnership was developed nearly a year ago, something Michael S. Taormina, managing director of the Cobb Energy Centre, describes as natural.

"We are in a very diverse city with many different musical tastes and tastes in the arts," Taormina said. He said the venue has filled a niche in Atlanta and also attracts people from different states, making it a part of cultural tourism.

Rosen said each city has a unique nature, and the series is tailored to match it. A Jazz Roots

advisory committee takes in the desires of the community of each city regarding the series.

“This is about something very organic – you’re actually planting a root in the city. It’s saying we want to bring this community together. It’s about the music,” he said. “It connects to Atlanta in a very organic way, more than many any other cities, so that’s why we were really excited about coming to Atlanta.”

Rosen said the show will incorporate artists that will show the whole spectrum of jazz for different generations. Al Jarreau and Ramsey Lewis, both Grammy winners, will open the series with “Jazz and Soul” on Sept. 21 at 8:30 p.m. Rosen said, “They are iconic artists with hit records and long histories. In many ways they tell the story, just between those two artists, of what everything we’re doing here stands for.”

“The Ladies of Jazz” will feature Grammy winners Esperanza Spalding and Terri Lyne Carrington on Oct. 19 at 8 p.m. Dave Koz will return Nov. 30 at 8 p.m. with his Christmas Tour. Sheila E., David Benoit and Javier Colon will join him on stage.

For each concert, a group of 100 students from metro Atlanta schools will have a chance to attend the sound check and interact with the musicians, see the show and participate in a Q&A session with the performers. Carl Griffin, Rosen’s business partner of more than 30 years, runs the educational component of the program. Rosen said it’s exciting to see a young person learn about the music and get an opportunity to play with the artists.

“That’s really a very unique part of (the series), Rosen said. “We want to make sure people understand what we are doing. And this I think is the most compelling part of not only great shows but bringing young people here and this whole history and everything they could possibly gain out of it.”

He adds, “It will be a life-changing experience.”

The Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre Foundation is a nonprofit organization that operates to secure financial resources for its community and educational outreach programs, including ArtsBridge. Tickets for “Jazz Roots” go on sale Friday at 10 a.m. For more information about the series, visit www.cobbenergycentre.com.