



**CHANDLER  
CENTER**  
FOR THE ARTS



# PROGRAM

BILLY OCEAN

25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MARIACHI  
AND FOLKLÓRICO  
FESTIVAL

THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF  
GEORGE MICHAEL

VOL. XXXV  
ISSUE 2

CELEBRATE  
**35**  
YEARS



Delivering water and power®

# PROMOTING THE ARTS, TOGETHER.

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 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](http://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.

### Board of Directors

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- Candy Yu

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- Linda Yarbrough

# WELCOME TO CHANDLER CENTER FOR THE ARTS!



On behalf of the staff and volunteers of the CCA, welcome to Chandler Center for the Arts. We are delighted to have you join us for our 35<sup>th</sup> Season! It is an honor to serve you in Downtown Chandler's premier arts and entertainment destination. We are committed to creating a welcoming experience

for all. Should you have any feedback regarding your visit to the CCA, please feel free to share it with one of our staff members or volunteers.

This season features a diverse array of artists and musical talents: GRAMMY® award winning artists PJ Morton, Billy Ocean, Men at Work and Bobby Rush as well as many GRAMMY® nominees. I am particularly enthusiastic about the theatrical performances. Literature to Life's new production offers a fresh perspective on F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic, *The Great Gatsby*. Two musical biographies will captivate even the most devoted fans of George Michael and Aretha Franklin. These, along with other dynamic performances such as *STOMP*, *Syncopated Ladies*, and *The Wizard of OZ* will all take to the Steena Murray Mainstage this season.

This exceptional season is made possible by your generous support through ticket purchases, memberships, and donations. Your contribution enables us to provide free arts experiences to over 15,000 families, seniors, and veterans each year. We invite you to consider making a deeper investment to your local arts center by visiting [chandlercenter.org/donate](http://chandlercenter.org/donate). Now, as we dim the house lights, please sit back and enjoy the show. It is showtime!

With gratitude,

**Michelle MacLennan**

*General Manager, Chandler Center for the Arts*



# OUR IMPACT

In the **2023-2024 SEASON**, the Chandler Center for the Arts had the following impact on our community.

**8,666** young people were reached with performing and visual arts programs through Connecting Kids.

**160,000** patrons experienced the arts through diverse programming

**3,000** individuals and families attended with free admission to ticketed performances

**3,000** creative workers engaged on a creative basis

**9,300** community members attended free concerts

**1,300** tickets were provided to veterans, active duty members & their families

**138** volunteers donated **7,063** hours of their time to CCA



## WELCOME

On behalf of the City of Chandler, thank you for choosing Chandler Center for the Arts. Chandler Center for the Arts is a cornerstone in our community, offering a myriad of distinct entertainment options and conveniently located in Chandler's vibrant Downtown. I am confident you will have an unforgettable experience. The diversity that makes our community unique is showcased and celebrated through the programs the CCA presents.

The 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season promises an eclectic mix of performances, featuring renowned artists like Men At Work, Billy Ocean, Boney James and Syncopated Ladies. The season also includes performances by The Texas Tenors, the highest-ranking vocal group in the history of *America's Got Talent*, and DRUMLine Live, showcasing the electrifying marching bands from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, among others.

Chandler Center for the Arts is dedicated to providing outstanding customer service and delivering some of the best entertainment in the Valley. Enjoy the performance; we look forward to welcoming you back 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:** Vice Mayor OD Harris, Mayor Kevin Hartke, Councilmember Mark Stewart.



### CHANDLER CULTURAL FOUNDATION

**Back row, from left:** David Woodruff, Christopher McMullan, Michelle Mac Lennan  
**Front row, from left:** Jennifer Sanchez, Julia Marreel, Mari Jo Woolf-Whitaker, LaTricia Woods, Susan Baker, Terri Rettig, Erika Castro, Peppur Chambers, Sherida McMullan  
**Not pictured:** Mike Halle, Candy Yu, Jeanne Forbis, Ellie Watland and Jyoti Pathak



### CHANDLER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (CUSD) GOVERNING BOARD

**Front row, from left:** Barb Mozdzen, President, Patti Serrano, Vice President **Back row, from left:** Joel Wirth, Kurt Rohrs, and Jason Olive



## A Distinct Performing Arts Center

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, 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.

# THANK YOU

## TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

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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.

Harriet Rickert Barnes

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List of supporters as of September 11, 2024

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# BECOME A MEMBER



*"If you have any interest in arts or culture in Chandler, this is the best place to invest your dollars. The CCA is a gorgeous theatre, and the attractions encompass everyone's preferences. There is something for everyone at Chandler Center for the Arts."*  
- CCA Members Mary Kay and James Patmos

Become a member like the Patmoses and support Chandler's premier arts and culture destinations. You can become a member for as little as \$50 per year to support the arts and experience several benefits offered to CCA members including:

- Discounted tickets
- Exclusive advance presales, affording you the best seats in the house
- Special member-only events
- 2 for 1 voucher on select shows

Visit [chandlercenter.org/member](http://chandlercenter.org/member) or call 480-782-2680

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 Julie Wolters  
 Marissa Yuen  
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 Anonymous (6)

# PICK 5

Pick your 5 favorite performances this season and save \$6 on each show! It's a subscription you curate!

## CHOOSE FROM THESE SHOWS & MORE:



### LESLIE JONES: LIVE!

Saturday, October 26, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.



### MEN AT WORK

Friday, November 1, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.



### THE TEXAS TENORS

Saturday, January 25, 2025 | 7:30 p.m.



### STOMP

Friday-Saturday, February 7-8, 2025 | 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.



### DRUMLINE LIVE

Saturday, March 8, 2025 | 7:30 p.m.



## CHANDLER Symphony Orchestra

Vanja Gjumar Nikolovski, Conductor

**Cheers to Youth!**  
 Sunday, November 3, 2024 | 5 p.m.

Gioachino Rossini: The Barber of Seville Overture  
 Winner of 2024 Youth Competition - TBD  
 Edvard Grieg: Peer Gynt Suites No. 1 & 2  
 Chandler Center for the Arts

**Deck the Holidays with CSO!**  
 Sunday, December 1, 2024 | 5 p.m. & 6 p.m.

Felix Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream:  
 Scherzo; Felix Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in E  
 minor, Leslie Frey Andereg, soloist; Antonín Dvořák:  
 Symphony No. 9  
 Risen Savior Lutheran Church

(602) 582-7374 | info@chandlersymphony.com | chandlersymphony.com

*Tickets are not required for these concerts.  
 Your donations are gratefully accepted in the lobby and are fully tax-deductible.*

Visit [chandlercenter.org/pick5](http://chandlercenter.org/pick5) to get started



# BILLY OCEAN



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024 | 7:00 P.M.

**Billy Ocean** is the biggest black recording star Britain has ever produced, one who has sold over 30 million records in his lifetime to date.

He has collected a pile of Gold and Platinum records across the world and hit the number one spot worldwide in the pop charts including the USA, Australia, Germany, Holland, and the UK. Billy has achieved extraordinary success as both an artist and a songwriter.

Born in Trinidad, Billy settled in London's East End when just seven years old. The calypso crazy kid soon got turned on to soul singers like Otis Redding and Sam Cooke, as well as pop groups like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, leading him to spend much of his study time in the music room.

Billy got his first break when he signed to GTO records, with whom he released his Motown-ish second single "Love Really Hurts Without You," which reached No. 2 in the UK charts and No. 12 in the US.

Two Top 20 singles followed: "Love on Delivery" and "Stop Me," then "Red Light Spells Danger" became a smash in both the UK and the US. Billy changed record labels and his move to Jive Records provided instant success, with the million selling American No. 1 single "Caribbean Queen" (for which Billy won a GRAMMY® for best R&B Vocal), followed by "Loverboy," and "Suddenly," which became the first of Billy's killer ballads. The album from which these singles came from spent a year in the US Charts selling double platinum (triple in Canada). Billy also performed on the American half of Live Aid, making 1985 a truly incredible year for him.

1986 wasn't bad either, opening with "When the Going gets Tough (The Tough Gets Going)," the theme song to the Michael Douglas/Kathleen Turner/Danny Devito movie *Jewel of the Nile*. Billy then launched the *Love Zone* album, which went straight to No. 2 in the UK charts, staying in the Top 40

for six months. In the US, there was a No. 1 single with "There'll be Sad Songs (To Make You Cry)". More hits were to follow with the now classic "Get Outta My Dreams; Get Into My Car," giving Billy yet another US No. 1 hit.

Billy proved himself to be one of the most hardworking artists on the live stage, touring the world to ever-growing enthusiastic audiences. After huge worldwide successes and years of touring, Billy decided to take a break to spend some well-earned time at home with his family.

In 2007, Billy decided to get back out to perform his hits again, this time with his daughter Cherie on backing vocals, with live dates in the UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and the Caribbean. The tour was a great success and culminated in his getting the bug once more for writing and recording.

2008 saw Billy back in the studio for the first time in 15 years, recording his new album *Because I Love You* which was released in 2009. In 2010 Billy went back on the road again with his band in the UK, Europe and the US with the release of *The Very Best of Billy Ocean*, which entered the UK album charts at number 17 and sold 72,000 copies in 4 weeks.

In 2012 he went back into the studio with his old buddy Barry Eastmond to record tracks that became the album *Here You Are* which was released in 2016 entering the charts at No 4 – his highest chart position since 1988.

2017 saw the *Here You Are* album released in the USA. The year was another fantastic one for him: playing shows in Dubai, USA, Canada, Spain, Mozambique, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Germany and even Luxembourg.

In 2018 Billy played a sell-out at Royal Albert Hall, which he felt was a real landmark.

Throughout 2018 and 2019 Billy continued to play shows around the world, and also finished his latest album, *One World*, out now.

ADMINISTRATION

Michelle Mac Lennan  
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*Lighting Supervisor*

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*Audio Supervisor*

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*Visual Arts Specialist*

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*Exhibits Program Coordinator*

# BOARD SPOTLIGHT



## Sherida McMullan

Sherida McMullan's passion for theatre began when she was a student at Howard University. While she was studying to become an engineer, she took an Intro to Theatre class as a break from

her STEM courses. Acting started as a hobby, but now Sherida has a deep appreciation for the arts and recognizes it as the "A" in STEAM.

Native to El Paso, Texas, she affectionately refers to her hometown as a cultural melting pot. Growing up there instilled the values of diversity, belonging, and inclusion early to Sherida's life. Ultimately, it was her upbringing and experience in the theatre that helped to shape the trajectory of her career.

"After graduating, I moved to Raleigh for work and started acting in local and professional performances and serving on theatre boards in my free time. It really gave me the ability to learn the technical aspect and also be able to think on a dime," says Sherida. "You practice improv. You learn how to communicate. To me, that makes not just engineering, but any profession better. Having the ability to communicate is something that will make you successful in this world, and the arts gives us that."

Her engineering career began at Intel in Technical Sales, where she excelled at bridging the gap between technical jargon and layman's terms. This communication skill, along with her commitment to inclusion, led her to leadership roles in diversity and inclusion at various tech companies. She now serves as Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at GitLab.

In June, Sherida was appointed Treasurer for the Chandler Cultural Foundation by Mayor Kevin Hartke. In her role, she focuses on asking critical questions, being inquisitive, and finding innovative ways to maximize the Foundation's impact on the Chandler community. She has served on the Chandler Cultural Foundation board since 2020.



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**CHANDLER  
CENTER**  
FOR THE ARTS

# 2024 2025

CELEBRATE **35**  
YEARS



PJ Morton:  
Cape Town to  
Cairo  
Tour



Muddy & Wolf Revisited with  
Bobby Rush and the North  
Mississippi Allstars



Leslie  
Jones:  
LIVE!

**PJ Morton:**  
Cape Town to  
Cairo Tour

10/18/24

**Average White  
Band Farewell  
Tour**

11/22/24

**Hooray for  
Hollywood: A  
New Years Eve  
Celebration**

12/31/24

**Muddy & Wolf  
Revisited with  
Bobby Rush  
and the North  
Mississippi Allstars**

1/31/25

**Leslie Jones:  
LIVE!**

10/26/24

**Brian  
McKnight:  
Season's  
Greetings**

12/20/24

**Boney James  
1/24/25**

**Literature  
To Life: *The  
Great Gatsby***

2/1/25

**Men at Work  
11/1/24**

**The Texas  
Tenors  
1/25/25**

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STOMP



Celtic  
Spells

**STOMP**

2/7/25-2/8/25

**R.E.S.P.E.C.T.**

A Celebration  
of the Music of  
Aretha Franklin

2/15/25

**Syncopated  
Ladies**

2/21/25

**International  
Guitar Night**

2/23/25

**DRUMline  
Live**

3/8/25

**The Wizard  
of OZ**

3/14/25 -  
3/15/25

**Celtic Spells**  
Featuring Máiréad  
Nesbitt

3/16/25

**Shakespeare  
in Jazz: Daniel  
Kelly Trio with  
Raina Sokolov-  
Gonzales**

4/4/25

**Cirque  
Mechanics:  
Pedal Punk**

4/11/25

**Piano Battle:  
Andreas vs  
Paul**

4/13/25

*Shows and dates subject to change.*

CCA & C.A.L.L.E. DE ARIZONA PRESENT THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

# MARIACHI AND FOLKLÓRICO FESTIVAL



**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2024 | 7:00 P.M.**



On behalf of C.A.L.L.E. de Arizona, it is my profound pleasure to welcome you to our 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Mariachi & Folklorico Festival. This milestone marks a quarter-century of celebrating the vibrant traditions, culture, and folklore of Mexico, a legacy that began with our founding members, Mr. Joe Garcia and Mr. Eddie Encinas. As we commemorate this special anniversary, I am deeply honored to carry forward their vision and commitment.

Whether you're a returning patron or joining us for the first time, we are thrilled to have you with us! The arts bring us together as a community, offering shared, uplifting experiences that resonate with our heritage. Tonight, we proudly present a spectacular lineup of talented musicians, singers, and dancers, all dedicated to showcasing the richness of Mexican culture.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our sponsors, patrons, board members, dancers, musicians, artists, volunteers, and the staff of the Chandler Center for the Arts. Your support is the backbone of this event, and we couldn't do it without you!

C.A.L.L.E. de Arizona (formerly C3HR) is a non-profit organization devoted to fostering a positive community environment, celebrating the beauty of Mexican culture, preserving a powerful legacy, instilling leadership in our youth, and, most importantly, promoting the value of education. The proceeds from this event will benefit our scholarship fund, which has helped many students in their pursuit of higher education over the years.

As the curtains rise and the music fills the air, may you find joy in the celebration and inspiration in the cultural tapestry we weave together. We eagerly anticipate the opportunity to welcome you back next year, as we continue to grow and evolve. If you would like to be involved in our mission please reach out to us.

Warmest regards,

**Vanessa Ramirez**

President of C.A.L.L.E. de Arizona  
Culture, Arts, Leadership, Legacy, Education







En nombre de C.A.L.L.E. de Arizona, es un gran placer darles la bienvenida a nuestro 25º Festival Anual de Mariachi y Folklorico. Este año marca un cuarto de siglo celebrando las vibrantes tradiciones, cultura y folclore de México, un legado que comenzó con nuestros miembros fundadores, el Sr. Joe Garcia y el Sr. Eddie Encinas. Al conmemorar este aniversario especial, me siento profundamente honrada de continuar su visión y compromiso.

Ya sea que cada año estén con nosotros o que nos acompañen por primera vez, ¡estamos encantados de tenerlos con nosotros! Las artes nos unen como comunidad, ofreciendo experiencias compartidas y enriquecedoras que resuenan con nuestra herencia. Esta noche, les presentamos con orgullo un espectáculo lleno de talentosos músicos, cantantes y bailarines, todos dedicados a mostrar la riqueza de la cultura mexicana.

Quisiera extender mi más sincero agradecimiento a nuestros patrocinadores, público, miembros de la mesa directiva,

bailarines, músicos, artistas, voluntarios y al personal del Chandler Center for the Arts. ¡Su apoyo es la columna vertebral de este evento, y no podríamos hacerlo sin ustedes!

C.A.L.L.E. de Arizona (anteriormente C3HR) es una organización sin fines de lucro dedicada a fomentar un ambiente comunitario positivo, celebrar la belleza de la cultura mexicana, preservar un legado poderoso, inculcar liderazgo en nuestra juventud y, lo más importante, promover el valor de la educación. Los ingresos de este evento beneficiarán nuestro fondo de becas, el cual ha ayudado a muchos estudiantes en su búsqueda de educación superior a lo largo de los años.

¡Disfruten del espectáculo, y esperamos celebrar con ustedes nuevamente el próximo año!

Atentamente,

**Vanessa Ramirez**

Presidenta de C.A.L.L.E. de Arizona  
Cultura, Artes, Liderazgo, Legado, Educación

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary C.A.L.L.E. de Arizona Dance Cast

We are thrilled to welcome the incredible dancers from Ballet Folklorico Quetzalli-AZ and Los Lupeños de San José as they come together to form the cast for the 25th Annual Chandler Mariachi and Folklorico Festival. These two distinguished companies, each with a rich history and deep commitment to preserving and celebrating Mexican culture through dance, bring unparalleled artistry and passion to this milestone event. Their collaboration promises to create an unforgettable evening that honors the traditions and innovation of Mexican folkloric dance.



**Ballet Folklorico Quetzalli-AZ** is a vibrant non-profit dance organization dedicated to preserving and celebrating the rich traditions of Mexican folkloric dance. Under the artistic direction of Vanessa Ramirez, the group has evolved from a recreational class at the City of Chandler's Snedigar Recreation Center into a prominent dance company with a stellar reputation. Recently marking their 16th anniversary, Ballet Folklorico Quetzalli-AZ has grown significantly and gained recognition for their dynamic performances.

The company has graced world-class venues and events, showcasing their artistry alongside Grammy Award-winning artists like Lila Downs, Aida Cuevas, and Mariachi Los Camperos. They have also performed with some of the most esteemed mariachi ensembles, including Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán, Mariachi Vargas, Mariachi Garibaldi, Mariachi Estrella de México and more, solidifying their place as a distinguished ambassador of Mexican culture through dance.

Founded in 1969, **Los Lupeños de San José** is a trailblazer among Mexican folk dance companies in the U.S., committed to preserving and enriching the vibrant tapestry of Mexican culture through the art of dance. As a non-profit organization, their mission centers on sustaining the presentation and education of Mexican folk traditions, fostering a universal appreciation for the folklórico genre. Guided by core values of artistry, education, and performance, Los Lupeños not only showcases the captivating beauty of traditional dances but also empowers individuals through accessible educational opportunities, nurturing a profound understanding and pride in Mexican heritage. Their vision is to inspire audiences worldwide, celebrating the dynamic and evolving spirit of Mexican folk culture.

Los Lupeños is led by Artistic Director and Choreographer Samuel Cortez



**Mariachi Legends—Leyendas del Mariachi**—unites musical icons from some of the most renowned and distinguished mariachi groups of the past three decades for an unforgettable evening. This unique assembly brings together legendary members from Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mariachi Los Camperos, Mariachi Cobre, and Mariachi América de Jesús Rodríguez de Hjar, showcasing the rich beauty and deep traditions of Mexican music.

This extraordinary collaboration offers a unique opportunity to witness the artistry and passion of these exceptional musicians, who have each played a significant role in shaping the mariachi genre. Their collective performances will not only honor the legacy of mariachi but will also inspire audiences of all ages, connecting generations through the timeless sounds of Mexico's musical heritage.

**Leyendas del Mariachi**—reúne a íconos musicales de algunos de los grupos de mariachi más reconocidos y distinguidos de las últimas tres décadas para una velada inolvidable. Esta extraordinaria reunión presenta a miembros legendarios de Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mariachi Los Camperos, Mariachi Cobre, y Mariachi América de Jesús Rodríguez de Hjar, quienes muestran la riqueza y las profundas tradiciones de la música mexicana.

Esta colaboración única ofrece la oportunidad de presenciar el arte y la pasión de estos excepcionales músicos, quienes han desempeñado un papel fundamental en la evolución del género del mariachi. Sus presentaciones colectivas no solo honrarán el legado del mariachi, sino que también inspirarán a audiencias de todas las edades, conectando generaciones a través de los sonidos de la herencia musical de México.

## Members of Leyendas del Mariachi



**Rafael Palomar**  
Guitar  
Former Mariachi Vargas



**German Lopez**  
Vihuela  
Former Mariachi Vargas



**Fernando Hernandez**  
Guitarrón  
Former Mariachi 2000 de Cutberto Perez



**Julio Martinez**  
Harp  
Former Mariachi Vargas



**Javier Rodriguez**  
Trumpet  
Former Mariachi Los Camperos



**Francisco Aguilar**  
Trumpet  
Former Mariachi America de Jesus Rodriguez



**Steve Carrillo**  
Trumpet  
Mariachi Cobre



**Miguel Barron**  
Violin  
Former Mariachi Vargas



**Moyces Vargas**  
Violin  
Former Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlan



**Ismael Hernandez**  
Violin  
Former Mariachi Los Camperos



**Jose Martinez Jr.**  
Violin  
Former Mariachi Vargas

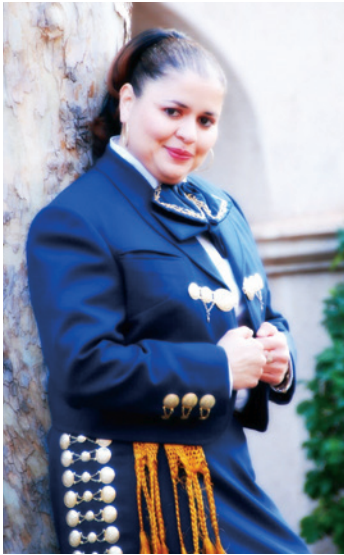


**Juan Rodriguez**  
Violin  
Former Los Camperos

**Martin Alfaro, Violin**  
Former Mariachi Los Camperos

**Oscar Ortega, Violin**  
Former Mariachi Vargas





**Special thank you to our VIP Reception artist, Olivia Calderon.**

A talented singer and guitarist from Eloy, Arizona, Olivia began performing at age 11. She has toured internationally, including in Beijing, and has appeared on TV shows like *La Reina de la Canción* and *America's Got Talent*. Olivia is a dedicated volunteer, previously teaching mariachi at Eloy Jr. High, and performs at military family events. Olivia holds degrees in Musical Performance and Criminal Justice from Northern Arizona University and currently serves as a Detention Transport Officer. Her passion for music continues to inspire, balancing her professional career with her love for singing.

**Master of Ceremonies**

**José A. Ronstadt** is a celebrated figure in Latino communities, known for his dynamic contributions to television and his lifelong activism for Hispanic causes. With a distinguished career spanning local, national, and international television, he has held executive roles at KTVW TV 33 Phoenix (Univision) and KVEA TV 52 Los Angeles (Telemundo). As a news anchor and respected journalist, Ronstadt has received numerous accolades, including Golden Mikes for various categories like "Best Newscast" and "Best Editorial Commentary." His work extends beyond journalism, as he has hosted and executive produced numerous national and local television shows that focus on Latino issues, news, and entertainment.



In addition to his television career, Mr. Ronstadt has made significant contributions to the music world by hosting premier mariachi conferences across the United States. These cultural events are crucial fundraisers for local nonprofits, and his impact in this area was recognized with his 2003 induction into the Tucson International Mariachi Hall of Fame. His extensive community involvement includes serving as Master of Ceremonies and keynote speaker at major Hispanic events. A native of Nogales, Sonora, and an alumnus of Arizona State University, Ronstadt's achievements have been further honored with the creation of the "José Ronstadt Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award" at ASU and multiple Lifetime Achievement Awards from prestigious organizations. He currently anchors "Noticiero Nacional Cierre de Edición" on Estrella TV Network, where his commitment to covering Hispanic community issues continues to shine.

# THE NUTCRACKER



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- *The East Valley Tribune*

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480.644.6500, [mesaartscenter.com](http://mesaartscenter.com)

\*Base price. Venue fees apply.



Sharon Seder Meko - Founding Artistic Director

**balletetudes.net**

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.

# THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF GEORGE MICHAEL



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2024 | 7:00 P.M.

## Cast

Craig Winberry . . . . . Lead vocals  
 Connor Antico . . . . . Lead vocals  
 Collin Keller . Music Director, guitar and background vocals  
 Autumn Jones . . . . . Lead and background vocals  
 Riccardo Gresino . . . . . Music Director and keyboards  
 Aubrey Situmorany . . . Bass guitars and background vocals  
 Victor Blagoev. . . . . Bass guitars and background vocals  
 Marc Encabo. . . . . Keyboards and background vocals  
 Sam Ruff . . . . . Drums

## Synopsis

**The Life and Music of George Michael** chronicles the amazing journey George Michael had with music and his fans. The show captures the performance and sound of George Michael with staging and lighting while telling his story through early music hits from Wham! and his illustrious solo career.

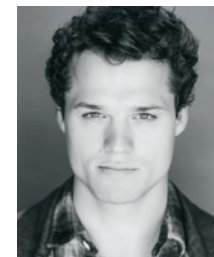
As one of the biggest international stars of our time, the show will have fans on their feet dancing and singing along to blockbuster hits including “Wake Me Up Before You Go Go,” “Freedom,” “Faith,” “Careless Whisper,” “Father Figure,” and many more. Spanning a four decade career with over 115 million albums sold, *The Life and Music of George Michael* shows his rise to fame as a member of Wham! in the 80’s. He went solo in 1987 with *Faith*, one of the biggest albums of all time which included multiple number one hits.

Throughout George’s career, he won two GRAMMY® Awards, three Brit Awards, three American Music Awards and four MTV Video Music Awards. The show is produced by Ruckus Entertainment, the creators of *The Simon & Garfunkel Story* and other touring hits.

## Who’s Who



**Craig Winberry** is thrilled to take the stage again in *The Life and Music of George Michael*. Theater credits include *Mamma Mia*, *The Wild Party*, *Thank You For Being A Friend: Golden Girls Musical Parody*, *Shooting Star*, and *The Gunfighter Meets His Match*. TV/Film appearances in *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, *Porch*, *Rockaway*, and features on *Billions* and *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. Craig also wrote and starred in cabarets *Executive Order* and *Christmas Spirits: Neat Edition*. He’s one half of the dance music duo Basesuite streaming on all platforms globally. When not on a stage or in the studio, Craig spends his time crafting culinary delights for friends and family, snuggling with his furry friend Bubbles and exploring his hometown, New York City. Connect with @[craigwinberry](#) on all social media.

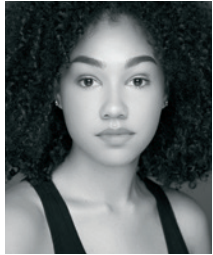


**Connor Antico** is a versatile actor, singer, and songwriter with a BFA in Musical Theater from Pace University in New York City. He has performed in notable theater productions, including playing Jack in the *Jack & Diane* musical workshops by John Mellencamp, and Carlo in *The Comedy of Tenors* at the Arrow Rock Lyceum and Hampton Theaters.



On television, Connor appeared as a co-star in Amy Schumer's *Girl You Need No Makeup*. His film credits include a co-starring role in *Greater: The Brandon Burlsworth Story*.

Currently, Connor is the lead singer for Paul Pesco, known for his work with Hall and Oates and Madonna, and also works as a fitness instructor. He is passionate about bringing joy through his performances and draws inspiration from George Michael.



**Autumn Jones** is a soulful R&B singer-songwriter and an alumna of Berklee College of Music in Boston. She's had a busy few years along with her band The Smoke releasing her debut EP *4.4.4.*, winning a Tracks Music Award for her single "Bittersweet" and showcasing her music at venues like Boston City Winery, The Groove and Rockwood Music Hall in New York City. Notion Magazine described her work as having a "neo-soul-style with full and effusive vocals reminiscent of blues veteran Corinne Bailey Ray."



**Aubrey Situmorang** is an Indonesian bass player in Los Angeles, California. Aubrey has played for notable artists such as Bipolar Sunshine and SASAMI; Aubrey's recent performances include opening for Yeah Yeah Yeahs at the Huntington Bank Pavilion in Chicago, Illinois, and for Soccer Mommy at Outside Lands Festival in San Francisco, California both in the summer of 2023. Beyond her live performances, Aubrey also released her album *One Point One* which received a nomination for Best

Jazz Album at Indonesia's highest music awards: Anugerah Musik Indonesia 2022.

Long Beach. As a songwriter, composer, and collaborator, he has arranged for, performed, and recorded with and for various artists and groups across the US, UK, Europe, and the Philippines.



**Victor Blagoev** is an up and coming Bulgarian/American bassist born and raised in Prague, Czech Republic. He is quickly expanding his repertoire, having played with internationally renowned musicians across Europe and North America, from European jazz and pop staples to blues legends (Dianna Greenleaf). Most recently, he opened for rising country star Chris Lane. He studied at the Berklee College of Music on a coveted scholarship, having graduated with the highest honors. During his time at Berklee, Victor was in high demand as one of the leading bass players of the school and won awards from the bass department. He has since recently relocated to Los Angeles, with the mission to deliver and make his way up the ranks of the music industry. Victor pursues a number of creative and artistic endeavors, being a member of the innovative orchestral pop-rock group Daniel Monte, the award-winning Sergio de Miguel group, and working with rising-star artist Gayathri Krishnan.



**Marc Encabo** is a Los Angeles-based multi-instrumentalist and performer. Being heavily surrounded by music throughout his upbringing in San Diego, CA, he found his musical voice through school, YouTube, and church,

and taught himself to play guitar, piano, and bass, which led to him furthering his studies as a jazz bassist at the renowned Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at CSU.



**Riccardo Gresino** is a professional piano and keyboard player & music director based in Los Angeles, CA. Born and raised in Italy, he is well recognized for his outstanding sound-making abilities, competence, and trustworthiness. Riccardo's artistry is proven in performances and recordings with established musicians such as Latin GRAMMY®-nominated vocalist Rubel, Gianni Coscia (ECM Records), SESSI, Kenny Sharp, Anna Margo, AM Dandy, Tristan Simone, and more.

In a significant milestone, Riccardo became the music director and keyboard player for the *The Life and Music of George Michael* (US Tour 2022-2024) showcasing his versatility and expertise. As a Recording Academy member and GRAMMY® U Mentor, Riccardo Gresino continues to be an active member of the music industry and to inspire a new generation of musicians.



**Sam Ruff** is a drummer and music producer residing in Los Angeles. He holds two degrees from Berklee College of Music and has shared the stage with artists such as Lee Ritenour, Wayne Brady, and many more.



**Collin Keller** is an American guitarist, touring musician, songwriter, and producer from the heartland of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Currently residing in Los

Angeles, Collin is a Berklee College of Music graduate specializing in songwriting and performance. He has toured internationally including appearances on major festival stages and is credited as a songwriter having worked with global major-label artists.

Playful yet mesmerizing, his musical style reflects the heart of John Mayer, the energy of Jack Garratt, and the spirit of The Beatles. Notable past performances include Osheaga Festival, Switchyard Music Festival, and *The Life and Music of George Michael*, alongside being nominated as 'Boston Pop Artist of The Year' 2018.

#### About Ruckus Entertainment (Producers):

Ruckus Entertainment, based in Los Angeles and formed in 2022, brings together veteran entertainment producers Alison Spiriti, Justin Sudds, Dean Elliott and Ralph Schmidtke who are collectively responsible for producing over 100 touring productions seen by millions around the world. Their burgeoning production company brings audiences world-class concerts and live events and is focused on celebrating the history and music behind iconic, globally recognized musical artists. Current productions include *The Simon & Garfunkel Story*, *The Life and Music of George Michael* and *The British Invasion*.



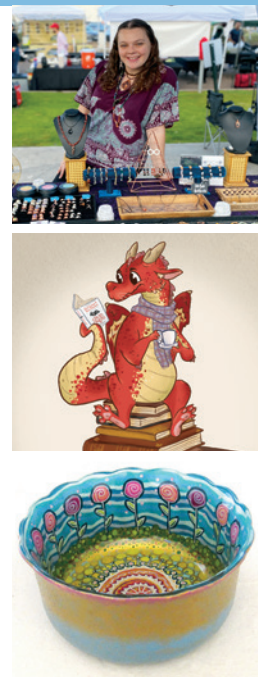
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**Ann Marie**  
 Box Office Associate

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## Late Night Eats



DOWNTOWN CHANDLER AFTER THE SHOW!



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In 2025, Intel will celebrate its 45th anniversary in Arizona. Over the years, we've been committed to innovation and investment, a commitment reflected in our employee volunteer program, 'Intel Involved.' We're proud to share that in 2023, our 12,000 employees dedicated 73,000 hours to volunteering at hundreds of schools and nonprofits in Arizona.

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