

CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING AND CINEMATIC ARTS

Boyer College of Music and Dance

Jazz on Broad:
Carmen Bradford, voice

Wednesday, October 29, 2025
Temple Performing Arts Center Lobby

4:30 PM Master Class
7:30 PM Performance

About the Artist

CARMEN BRADFORD is jazz royalty, a 2024 Count Basie Orchestra Family, GRAMMY Award winner for “Basie Swings the Blues – the Count Basie Orchestra.” She’s been nominated five times for GRAMMY Awards and is the recipient of the Los Angeles Jazz Society’s Jazz Vocalist Award. With her body of work, which reflects her vast experience, versatility, and technical brilliance, she has carved out her place in jazz history, and she continues to contribute to the preservation of this uniquely American art form.

Bradford was born in Austin, Texas and raised in Altadena, California. The daughter of legendary cornetist and composer Bobby Bradford and world-renown jazz vocalist, composer, and author Melba Joyce, and granddaughter of Melvin Moore (who sang with Lucky Millender and his Big Band, Dizzy Gillespie’s Big Band, and the Ink Spots), Bradford grew up with music in her home and in her heart.

She was discovered and hired by William “Count” Basie when she was just 22; she went on to be the featured vocalist with the legendary Count Basie Orchestra for nine years and has continued to perform with them regularly throughout her career. All four of her GRAMMY Award nominations are for albums with the Count Basie Orchestra, including two in the 1980s and a third, “Big Boss Band,” with guitarist George Benson. (She and Benson performed the classic duet, “How Do You Keep the Music Playing,” on the *Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*.) The fourth is 2022’s “Live At Birdland.”

In 1992, Bradford released her first debut album, “Finally Yours” (Evidence Records), to critical acclaim. In 1995, the release of her second solo album, “With Respect” (Evidence Records), established Bradford as one of jazz music’s most diverse and exciting vocal stylists.

Thirty-sixth and thirty-eighth performances of the 2025-2026 season.

Bradford has performed and/or recorded with Patti Austin, Tony Bennett, George Benson, Shelly Berg, James Brown, Benny Carter, Dori Caymmi, John Clayton and the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, Freddie Cole, Lena Horne, Kurt Elling, Wynton Marsalis, Jeremy Monteiro, David Murray, Willie Nelson, James Newton, Kenny Rankin, Lou Rawls, Doc Severinsen, Frank Sinatra, Byron Stripling, Tierney Sutton, Jeff Tyzik, Joe Williams, Nancy Wilson, Liz Wright, and countless other artists around the world.

She also has performed and/or recorded with the Dallas Symphony, the Dani Felber Big Band, the Detroit Symphony, the DIVA Jazz Orchestra, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the National Symphony, the Philadelphia Pops, the Rochester Philharmonic, the Vancouver Philharmonic, and many other organizations.

Bradford teamed with singer/composer Kenny Rankin for the *Benny Carter Songbook Project*, performing with him the duet, "And All That Jazz." Other notable artists on the album include Ruth Brown, Jon Hendricks, Shirley Horn, Diana Krall, Peggy Lee, Diane Reeves, Bobby Short, Joe Williams, and others. At the request of Benny Carter, Bradford also sang "Key Largo" on this GRAMMY Award-winning album.

Bradford's 2004 release, "Home With You" (Azica Records), is a warm and beautiful collection of vocal and piano duets with jazz great Shelly Berg. In 2008, with the release of "Live from Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola: Sherrie Maricle & The DIVA Jazz Orchestra featuring Carmen Bradford," Bradford returned to her big band roots. That recording ultimately brought her back to her first big band family, as well: She continues to tour with the Count Basie Orchestra, always grateful to Count Basie for opening the door for her. "When the Count Basie Orchestra calls me," she says, "I go."

The 2015 release of "Invisible Design," with jazz great John Mills, showcases Bradford's versatility. 2015 also saw the release of "A Very Swingin' Basie Christmas" with the Count Basie Orchestra (conducted by Scotty Barnhart). The album features Bradford, Ledisi, Ellis Marsalis, and Johnny Mathis.

In 2016, Bradford's was the voice on the album "Imagination Nation," a tribute to Nelson Mandela by South African trumpeter Darren English. This critically-acclaimed album won the Pledge for Peace award from the Global Peace Song Awards and was named Best in Jazz.