Eddie Murphy to be next Oscar host

Florence Anthony

It's official: Eddie Murphy will host the 84th Academy Awards, which ABC will broadcast live from the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood on Feb. 26. Brett Ratner and Don Mischer, who are producing the annual awards show, presented their choice on Tuesday to officials at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, who then signed off on Murphy hosting. Ratner recently directed Murphy in Universal's upcoming "Tower Heist," in which Murphy co-stars with Ben Stiller, in theaters Nov. 4.

In a statement, Murphy said: "I am enormously honored to join the great list of past Academy Awards hosts, from Hope and Carson to Crystal, Martin and Goldberg, among others. I'm looking forward to working with Brett and Don on creating a show that is enjoyable for both the fans at home and for the audience at the Kodak Theatre as we all come together to celebrate and recognize the great film contributions and collaborations from the past year."

The glibatter who attended Dr. and Mrs. Jessie R. Goodall III's recent fundraiser, "An Affair to Remember," at their Hampton's estate, can't stop talking about the evening's selected beverage, Adult Chocolate Milk. Even with three cases, the liqueur, which is smooth and deletable, was so popular that the bars ran out before the night's end. Stay tuned for the Goodall's annual Movers & Shakers holiday party on Saturday, Jan. 21. Let's hope they stock up on Adult Chocolate Milk.

Boasting one of today's most powerful and melodious voices, Natasha C. Coward has been singing for 10 years, and her latest album, "No Warning Signs," the sexy, sultry songstress is getting ready for her Sept. 17 performance in one of music entrepreneur Shirley Brooks' legendary showcases at Iguana in Midtown Manhattan. Meanwhile, Coward, who has been the opening act for singing greats like Nancy Wilson, Jon Lucien, Fredric Jackson and Shirley Caesar, says she "wants to continue to bless folks with real music and bring back real R&B."

Harlem Chamber Players: 'Music at St. Mary's'

Alicia Hall Moran

The Harlem Chamber Players are first when it comes to bringing high-caliber, affordable and accessible live chamber music directly to the people of Harlem.

Their acclaimed chamber music series, Music at St. Mary's, sustains and maintains an audience for classical music "inside the greater cultural landscape of Harlem, which includes jazz, dance, the literary, literature, the visual arts and contemporary pop culture," says clarinetist Liz Player, founder and executive director of the Harlem Chamber Players.

The first must-see concert, hosted by journalist Eric K. Washington, is Sunday, Sept. 18 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (located at 126th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue).

"St. Mary's is an incredibly intimate and comfortable space, and the acoustics are really good," says Player. The concert features Brahms' "Clarinet Quintets." "We love our fantastic-violinist Richard Brice," she says. "We always try to find beautiful music to show off his playing."

Guest vocalist mezzo-soprano Carolyn Sebron will sing Brahms' "Two Songs, Op. 91," with Evelyn Goetz on piano and clarinetist Liz Player joining the obligato viola part. "Amadis Azikiwe, a violinist and violist, will play the early Mozart 'B-flat Quintet,' which I think makes a nice contrast to the somber music of Brahms," says Player.

Additionally you can speak with these artists at the "Meet the Artists" reception held after every concert.

Music at St. Mary's began in 2008 as a project between Player and violinist Charles Dalton, who met while performing in the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Symphony's annual Black History Month gala concert at Carnegie Hall.

Inspired by the founder of the NYCHA Symphony Orchestra, Janet Wolfe, Player and Dalton created a summer music festival in the neighborhood of Bushwick/Williamsburg. West Harlem.

The Rev. Dr. Earl Koppkamp of St. Mary's, wishing to cultivate the enthusiasm generated by those multi-ethnic, multi-cultural chamber music events, sponsored the concert performance series. Wolfe signed on as a founding board member, and at 97 years old, she's still one of Harlem Chamber Players' biggest donors. "I hope to continue in her vein, creating opportunities for classically trained minority musicians," says Player.

The second concert in the series, Nov. 13's "An Afternoon of Bach," features "Brandenburg Concerto No. 6," with Richard Brice and Amadis Azikiwe from the Ritz Chamber Players (based in Jacksonville, Fl.), and "Brandenburg Concerto No. 5," with pianist Evelyn Goetz, an original member of the Harlem Chamber Players.

"My good friend Lisa Araki is playing flute, and Suzanne Ormstein will be joining us for this first time as solo violinist. Violinist Ashley Home opens the concert with the 'Violin Concerto in A minor,'" says Player.

Feb. 26 is the Harlem Chamber Players' fourth annual Black History Month celebration, hosted by WXYC radio personality Jen Pari, who will lead a must-see lineup featuring conductor Tial Makelk and soprano Andrea Bradford, who returns to sing with pianists Wayne Sanders, the director of Opera Ebony on piano.

Last season, Player received an email from Wilmer Wise saying, "If you ever need a trumpet player, call me."

"Wilmer is a real heavyweight," said Player, and she seized the opportunity to program him for the spring finale concert on April 29. Wise will perform in Saint-Saëns' Septet for trumpet, piano, string quartet and bass.

Initially, Player admits she had reservations about instituting a chamber music series, but she was encouraged by the growing community response. "Our audience is growing," she says. "We program only the most beautiful chamber pieces that we think the audience will love and select the musicians who bring out the best in the music. We try to keep it real."

Tickets are just $10 to $15, but anyone unable to afford the price is welcome to come to the church to listen for free. Season subscriptions are also available and are still available for subscription. Contact (212) 866-1892 or info@harlemchamberplayers.org.

Share your classical music events and news at suite. sounds@ya.com.

Hendricks and Heath open JALC season

Ron Scott

Jazz Notes

As summer fades backgrounded by its extended hot summer nights and faded outdoor jazz concerts, fall will now take center stage, moving indoors from brisk, breezy nights to a hot new season of concerts and live music at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Sept 24, opening night at the Rose Theater at Frederick P. Rose Hall (60th Street at Broadway), is sure to be a barnburner with high intensity swing-singing power. Jon Hendricks, the master of vocalese, will be joined by marquee vocalists Bobby McFerrin, Dianne Reeves, Kevin Burke, Sachal Vasandani and Ari and Michelle Hendricks (the latter two are Jon's daughters) to perform a classic Lambert, Hendricks and Ross repertoire.

Jimmy Heath, who played a significant role in building and cultivating the landscape of jazz as an arranger, composer, saxophonist and educator, will also grace the stage in a rare performance with his big band. As a Libra, he will also be celebrating his 85th birthday.

Heath has performed on more than 100 albums, including seven with the Heath Brothers and an industry leading 1800 songs. He has written more than 120 compositions, many of which have become jazz standards recorded by other artists, including Art Farmer, "Cannonball," Alderfer, Clark Terry, Cheb Baker, Miles Davis, James Moody, Milt Jackson, Ahmad Jamal and Ray Charles.

In 1987, Hendricks teamed up with Duke Lambert and Ross to form the legendary vocal trio Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. With Hendricks as lyricist, the trio perfected the art of vocation, a rhythmic flow with swing harmonies on vocal instruments. This unique style earned them the designation "Number One Vocal Group in the World" for five consecutive years from Melody Maker magazine.

Back in the day, carrying a Miles Davis, Lambert, Hendricks and Ross album was a badge of hipness. The first time I heard "Chase the Dope," I was blown away. In order to hang out with the cool jazz crew, you had to know the lyrics to "Gimme That Wine," "Twist" or "Little Niles" straight through and not stuttering a single note.

Hendricks served on the Kennedy Center Honors committee under Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton.

In 2000, Hendricks returned to his hometown to teach at the University of Toledo, where he was appointed distinguished professor of jazz studies and received an honorary doctorate of the performing arts. He was recently selected to be the first American jazz artist to lecture at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Today, no group can touch their vocation performance. Hendricks, Lambert and Ross need to recognize where the real flow originated, until then, they are just frontin'.

At 90 years old, Hendricks has the goods, no frontin'. Jon Hendricks is imitated but never duplicated. He will be leading his own band for this performance. This is going to be a special moment in jazz that will have no comparison. The show begins at 8 p.m.

Hot Seats, 10 orchestra seats for each Rose Theater performance (excluding jazz for Young People concert), are available for purchase to the general public on the Wednesday of each performance week. Hot Seats are available only by walk up at the box office, with a maximum of two per person, and are subject to availability.

For more information, visit jalc.org.