



METRO ATLANTA

# Karen Briggs, Regina Belle, Phil Perry bring jazz, soul to Stockbridge



Credit: Ben Hendren

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Acclaimed violinist Karen Briggs brought a night of jazz and soul to Stockbridge on Saturday with a little bit of salsa, Minneapolis funk and centuries-old classics mixed in.

Briggs and her Contempo Orchestra were the headliners for the concert, which was sponsored by WCLK as the part of the Clark Atlanta University station's series of events this year celebrating its 50th anniversary. The event was recorded for a possible airing on public television at a later date.

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But Briggs and the orchestra didn't carry the show alone. There were megawatts of star power joining them during various moments of the concert.

R&B legends Regina Belle, Oleta Adams and Phil Perry commanded attention on vocal tracks while saxophonist Jazmin Ghent, guitarist and bassist Brian Bromberg and electric violinist Jerald Daemyon put their mastery of different instruments in the spotlight.



Credit: Ben Hendren

Bassist Brian Bromberg performs on stage. The Stockbridge Amphitheater was host to the Karen Briggs Contempo Orchestra on Saturday, July 6, 2024 (Ben Hendren for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

And as if that panel wasn't diverse enough, the night included some freewheeling scatting by Tommy Davidson of 90's sketch show favorite "In Living Color."

Wait, what, Tommy Davidson? The long-suffering object of desire of Jamie Foxx's hilarious Wanda character? That Tommy Davidson?

Yup, Davidson has quietly been dropping music for the past few years, working with greats such as Dave Koz, Najee and Richard Elliot. He said Saturday's concert was one of his first opportunities to display his musical side because of his friendship with Briggs.



Credit: Ben Hendren

Comedian and musician Tommy Davidson performs on stage. The Stockbridge Amphitheater was host to the Karen Briggs Contempo Orchestra on Saturday, July 6, 2024 (Ben Hendren for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

Turns out though that switching brands takes time. While Davidson was serious in his singing, the lighter side of him was also on display as he wiggled and bounced about the stage with the fun and frivolity for which he is known. Briggs would later say that he added the slight levity at her request because she didn't want the audience throwing things if they didn't fully understand his transition.

"We love you Tommy," she said as he left the stage after his number.

Briggs opened the show with "Scheherazade's Groove" and "Rain Forest," two cuts that showed her dexterity on the violin and had the crowd whooping in appreciation.

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“This is my husband named Marvin,” she said to concertgoers about her violin. “Girl, he’s good to me. He bought me a new car. He takes care of my kids. He’s German, and we don’t understand everything, but we have good chemistry.”



Credit: Ben Hendren

Saxophonist Jazmin Ghent plays a solo.. The Stockbridge Amphitheater was host to the Karen Briggs Contempo Orchestra on Saturday, July 6, 2024. (Ben Hendren for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution)



Briggs joined Bromberg on “Orient Express” while Ghent backed him on “Minneapolis 1987,” an homage to Prince, Jimmy Jam, Terry Lewis and the sound of the Minnesota city. Bromberg praised Briggs’ professionalism, revealing that as they played, he messed up. The audience, he said, wasn’t aware of his faux pas, but Briggs was and kept going as he tried to get back on track, an example of an expert at the top of her game.



Credit: Ben Hendren

Singer Regina Belle performs on stage. The Stockbridge Amphitheater was host to the Karen Briggs Contempo Orchestra on Saturday, July 6, 2024. (Ben Hendren for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

“Time to bring up some queendom,” Briggs said in introducing Belle and Adams. “Y’all ready for that?”



Credit: Ben Hendren

Singer and pianist Oleta Adams performs on stage. The Stockbridge Amphitheater was host to the Karen Briggs Contempo Orchestra on Saturday, July 6, 2024. (Ben Hendren for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

In the only technical mishap of the night, Adams keyboard didn't work when she sat down to play. But once it was fixed, she moved the audience with the plaintive "Get Here," eliciting a standing ovation at the song's dramatic conclusion.

Not to be outdone by the ladies, soul singer Phil Perry had some of the best moments of the night. He began with a stirring cover of War's renowned "The World is a Ghetto."

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Musician Phil Perry sings on stage. The Stockbridge Amphitheater was host to the Karen Briggs Contempo Orchestra on Saturday, July 6, 2024. (Ben Hendren for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

But it was his version of Patti LaBelle's "If Only You Knew" that had the crowd shouting "amen," as he rapped about finding love and the importance of doing everything to keep it.

"You see she's the air that I breathe, and I found that she's all I need in my life because she's my wife," he said as the concertgoers roared in approval. "And I want y'all to understand that if I could live another 100 years, I would never find another love like hers."

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