

Press Release –

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Grammy Nominated Jazz Harpist, Brandee Younger to Perform at the Vermont Jazz Center on Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Who: Brandee Younger, harp; Rashaan Carter, electric and acoustic basses; Allan Mednard, drums

What: Progressive, original music influenced by Alice Coltrane and Dorothy Ashby

When: Saturday, January 18 at 7:30 PM

Where: The Vermont Jazz Center, 72 Cotton Mill Hill, #222, Brattleboro, VT 05301

Tickets available: online at www.vtjazz.org, by email at sarah@vtjazz.org, or reservations by phone 802 254 9088 ext. 1

Grammy Nominated Jazz Harpist, Brandee Younger to Perform at the Vermont Jazz Center on Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 7:30 PM

The Vermont Jazz Center is thrilled to present harpist Brandee Younger on January 18, 2025. She will be performing with her working trio: Rashaan Carter on electric and acoustic basses, and Allan Mednard on drums. Many VJC aficionados were moved by Younger's appearance with Makaya McCraven's ensemble last February. Since then, she has been consistently on the move: releasing a solo harp EP and touring London, Germany, Brooklyn, the Netherlands, Portugal, Australia, Brussels, and beyond.

Initially, listeners might not associate the harp with jazz music, which is one of the reasons why this concert is so significant. Brandee Younger is passionate about the harp's role in the jazz tradition, and one of her goals is to correct the inaccuracies of our misconceptions. In an online short, she pulls us away from the generalization of associating her instrument with "naked baby angels." Her mission is to convey the depth of the harp's importance and get beyond standard clichés. Younger is a tireless promoter of the music of Dorothy Ashby and Alice Coltrane, two jazz harpists who influenced her the most and whose music she continuously revisits.

Younger's love for music and dedication to the harp extends to her involvement with the American Harp Association (AHA), where she helps raise funds and serves as the co-president

of one of its board chapters. In 2017, she presented an article in the *AHA Journal* titled: “Alice Coltrane: The Harpist and Her Legacy.” In that essay, Younger illustrates the tremendous impact Alice Coltrane continues to impart on her life, not just musically, but also as a spiritual role model. She wrote about hearing Coltrane’s “Blue Nile” for the first time, illuminating how that piece became a stepping stone that led to a pathway of profound connections. Younger recounts the experience of being invited by Ravi Coltrane to perform at Alice Coltrane’s 2007 memorial service and the indelible memory of playing a tribute to her with Charlie Haden and Geri Allen. Younger continues to consider Coltrane’s son, Ravi, a friendly mentor. She writes,

“Over the years, he shared many wonderful stories about his mother and his upbringing. Well aware of his father’s great admiration of Carlos Salzedo, Ravi asked if I could combine several different elements into my playing: Alice’s spiritual style, Dorothy Ashby’s straight-ahead style, and Salzedo’s classical style. In working to achieve this musical idea, my playing grew in accordance and my style began to change. I am especially appreciative of Ravi’s patience with me over the years. Coming from a background of studying purely classical music, every single rehearsal and performance was, and still is today, a steep learning curve.”

Brandee Younger visited Alice Coltrane’s Ashram in 2011 and experienced first-hand how the gospel and bebop elements intertwined with the Indian classical tradition. “As I began to work more as a leader of my own ensemble, I incorporated Alice Coltrane’s compositions into my repertoire.” One of those pieces is “Blue Nile” which Younger presented on her 2019 album *Soul Awakening*. Other connections with Coltrane’s legacy include an invitation to play on Alice’s harp, and an ornate gift from John Coltrane. Younger relays: “Every concert that I play pays tribute to Alice Coltrane’s legacy... the spirit of her music felt more powerful than anything technical or on paper. It was more powerful than any industry standard and to me, it came from a place of selflessness and humility. This influence has helped me immensely over the years in my approach to playing the harp and interpreting music. It has allowed me to be flexible and to resist conforming to a particular genre or style.”

Younger’s flexibility is her calling card which connects her with musicians as disparate from the jazz world as Pete Rock and Beyoncé. In a televised interview with Tameron Hall in 2023, she recalled “even as a kid I wanted to play others’ styles... For a recital my mom would say, ‘play what you’ve been practicing but also playing something we’ll recognize.’ Over time I became comfortable about blending those worlds but it took a long time to put things together, I felt like I was living a double life.”

Today, Younger is recognized across many genres, from classical to hip-hop. She has released eight albums as a leader and appears on over 100 albums as a side-person. In 2022 she was nominated for two Grammy Awards (Best Instrumental Composition) and is the winner of a 2024 NAACP Image Award in the category of Outstanding Jazz Album for her album *Brand New Life*. Her expansive career includes recordings and touring opportunities with cultural icons Lizz Wright, Common, Drake, Billal, Ice Tee, Lauryn Hill, John Legend, Meshell Ndegeocello, Pharoah Sanders, BadBadNotGood, and Christian McBride. Notable jazz recordings include work with Joel Ross, Makaya McCraven, Jeremy Pelt, Ravi Coltrane, Marcus Strickland, Lakecia Benjamin, Shabaka Hutchings, Terri Lyne Carrington, and many others. Younger was featured in the Netflix Concert Documentary, *Beyoncé: Homecoming*, and recognized for her

original composition “Hortense,” which was featured in Quincy Jones and Steve McQueens’ “Soundtrack of America.” Younger has made it a point to reach out to new audiences, exposing a multigenerational cache of listeners to her compelling sound and concept. She is also an in-demand educator who serves on the faculty at New York University, Steinhardt School, and The New School College of Performing Arts.

The bassist for the Brandee Younger Trio is Rashaan Carter who grew up in the Washington D.C. area. While attending the New School in New York City he began to work with many of the faculty including Joe Chambers and Jimmy Owens and became a member of the Black Art Jazz Collective. He has worked with Benny Golson, Curtis Fuller and Louis Hayes, Wallace Roney, Marc Cary, Cindy Blackman, Doug and Jean Carn, Antoine Roney, Sonny Simmons, and many more. He also studied with one of his prime influences, Ron Carter. Carter appears on recordings with Black Art Jazz Collective, Lizz Wright, Norah Jones, Meshell Ndegeocello, Marc Cary, Aruán Ortiz, Wayne Escoffery, Josh Evans, Frank Lacy, Wallace Roney and others.

On drums will be Allan Mednard. His recordings include work with Michael Wolff, Arcoiris Sandoval, Jeremy Pelt, Ben Allison, and others. He has shared the stage with ensembles led by Kurt Rosenwinkel, Aaron Parks, Ben Street, Godwin Louis, Andrew D’Angelo, Alix Ambrose, Jaleel Shaw, Arco Iris Sandoval, Le Boeuf Brothers, Melissa Aldana and many others.

The VJC is grateful for the generosity of long-term supporter Diana Bingham for this concert’s sponsorship. Diana’s enduring friendship inspires us to continue to reach out to younger audiences. Publicity is underwritten by The Commons and The Brattleboro Reformer. The VJC is also grateful to the Vermont Arts Council, the Vermont Humanities Council, and New England Foundation of the Arts for their support and increased efforts to stabilize the existence of arts organizations during the pandemic. All performances at the VJC are subsidized by generous sponsorships to make ticket prices affordable.

Tickets for the Brandee Younger Trio at the Vermont Jazz Center are \$25+ general admission and are available online at www.vtjazz.org or by email at sarah@vtjazz.org. Tickets can also be reserved by calling the Vermont Jazz Center ticket line, 802-254-9088, ext. 1. Handicapped access is available by calling the VJC at 802 254 9088.

Livestream:

The online streaming of this event is open to the public. We ask those tuning in to donate to support the costs of providing world-class music and educational programs at the VJC. Access to the live stream can be found on our [website](#) and our [Facebook](#) page.

Quote: “Younger has almost single-handedly made a persuasive argument for the harps’ role in contemporary jazz.” - The New York Times

Video: Brandee Younger Trio with Rashaan Carter and Allan Mednard at KNKX FM from 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSLl34IFjE>