

By Connie Humiston for The Folly Theater

## **KARRIN ALLYSON QUINTET**

**Friday, December 19, 2014 – 8 p.m.**

“Photo caption: "If there's a choir in heaven, someday the exquisite vocalist Karrin Allyson will lead it. She's such an otherworldly talent that the creator probably already has her on heavy rotation." — *The Houston Press*

Four-time Grammy® nominee Karrin Allyson brings the magic of the season to the Folly as an internationally acclaimed jazz singer, songwriter, pianist, composer and bandleader as she puts us in the holiday spirit with some old favorites, as well as some new recordings from her 2013 release *Yuletide Hideaway*.

And she brings familiar sidemen: Rod Fleeman on guitar, Chris Caswell on Hammond, Todd Strait on percussion, Gerald Spaits and Bob Bowman trading sets on bass—primarily the same sidemen as on *Yuletide*, which *JAM* magazine editor Roger Atkinson selected amongst his favorites: “I want to buy a box and give one to everyone I know.”

The self-produced album, with originals that might have already become your personal classics, won a 4-star review from *DownBeat* and praise in the *New York Times* and *USA Today*.

With 14 recordings under her small-waisted belt, Karrin has showcased her extraordinary breadth of repertoire—standards by Gershwin and Porter, French popular music, Brazilian bossa nova and samba, and the music of John Coltrane, Duke, Miles, Dizzy and Thelonius Monk, not to mention blues, chanson and soft rock. The question is not what she does; rather, what doesn't she do?

After exploring pop, rock, classical singers and songwriters in Omaha, San Francisco and Minneapolis, Karrin cut her teeth in jazz for 10 years in Kansas City, signing with Concord Jazz and cutting her debut album, *I Didn't Know About You*, in 1992.

The album led to such accolades as being name-checked in *Playboy's* Annual Readers Poll and included top Kansas City musicians Paul Smith, Russ Long, Joe Cartwright, Danny Embrey, Rod Fleeman, Bob Bowman, Gerald Spaits, Todd Strait, Gary Sivils and Mike Metheny on a variety of bop-based material.

Near the end of the 1990s, she moved to New York City, achieving success as "a musician who can scat with authority, handle slow tempos with ease, and swing with abandon," according to *MusicHound Jazz: The Essential Album Guide*.

In 1999 Karrin received considerable attention for her release of *From Paris to Rio*, which broke recording tradition by including songs in a variety of languages—French, Portuguese, Brazilian, Italian, and English—because she can sell a song, no matter what language it's in.

Her ideas for albums often come from her experiences with listeners: "I also get a lot of faith and encouragement from my audience," she relates.

Karrin continued to earn acclaim into the 2000s with such releases as the 2001 double Grammy® award-nominated *Ballads: Remembering John Coltrane* and *In Blue* in 2002, the first album by a vocalist to be the most-played disc at jazz stations five weeks in a row. "I've always loved the blues," she told the *Pittsburgh-Post Gazette*. "I love the way the blues let you testify."

Besides *Ballads*, Grammy® nominations for Best Jazz Vocal Album include *Footprints* (2006), *Imagina: Songs of Brasil* (2008) and *'Round Midnight* (2011).

Her primary backing band has consisted of fellow Kansas City musicians Paul Smith, Danny Embrey, Rod Fleeman, Bob Bowman and Todd Strait, who have played on the majority of her recordings.

Chris Caswell, Karrin's co-writing partner and Hammond B-3 player on this Folly Theater date, has performed with 'everyone' including Bonnie Raitt, Paul Williams, Mos Def and Paul McCartney at the Grammys last year.

Recently, Karrin has recorded and performed with NYC greats such as Bruce Barth, Lewis Nash, Steve Nelson, Gil Goldstein, Steve Wilson, Peter Washington, Ed Howard, Adam Cruz and the late James Williams and Mulgrew Miller.

She currently spends two days out of three on tour, and mixes in clinics, private lessons and master classes, often with longtime partner Bill McGlaughlin.

What unites this wide world of music—brings it together and makes sense of it all—is Karrin's warmth and depth. She's not just singing a lyric; she's telling you her story. And then that becomes your story. You hear the music from the inside out.

What a Christmas blessing for the Folly audience, wrapped in a pixie package, as Karrin brings that warmth to Kansas City, celebrating being home for the holidays with her Quintet's *Yuletide Hideaway*. But as we know, Karrin never fails to light up Kansas City when she's home, no matter the season.