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# Cyrus Chestnut & Friends: A Charlie Brown Christmas

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**THE CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS**  
Governors State University

Presents

# **Cyrus Chestnut & Friends**

## *A Charlie Brown Christmas*



**Saturday, December 15, 2001**  
**8:00 p.m.**

*Media sponsor for tonight's performance is WBEE radio.*

*2001/2002 Season sponsored in part from a grant from the:*



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## Cyrus Chestnut

### Biography

Cyrus Chestnut was born in Baltimore in 1963 and started playing piano at Calvary Star Baptist Church at the age of 4 and the organ at the age of 7. Chestnut received further musical training from the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and the Berklee School of Music in Boston.

He began his musical career in 1988 playing for the legendary vocalist Jon Hendricks and went on to perform with many celebrated artists, including Wynton Marsalis, drummer Carl Allen and trumpeter Terence Blanchard and Donald Harrison. In 1991, he began two years a Carter's trio. In 1994, Chestnut launched his career as a leader with REVELATION, his debut for Atlantic Jazz. This album spent 7 weeks at #1 on Gavin's jazz charts. The avalanche of acclaim for REVELATION was immediate and by the end of 1994, Chestnut's first debut recording was voted the year's "Best Jazz Album" in an annual poll for *The Village Voice*.

As Chestnut prepared for his second recording on Atlantic Jazz, paramount in his mind was how to distinguish THE DARK BEFORE THE DAWN from his celebrated debut. "REVELATION," he noted, "represented the sign of things to come. Now was time to deliver on that promise. And with this second recording, my challenge was to express how I had grown since this first."

In addition to his recording success, Cyrus Chestnut has toured extensively throughout the United States and internationally as pianist for the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis; with vocalist Betty Carter and Jon Hendricks; and as leader of his own trio. A compact disc collaboration with jazz greats Joe Lovano, James Carter, vocalist Anita Baker and Ron Carter has been released to critical acclaim.

Chestnut will be the first to admit he doesn't think in terms of future direction. It's his growth that dictates what he'll be doing next. "I play what I live" he declared. "Therefore, just as I can't say what kinds of experience I'm going to have, I can't foretell the directions in which my music will go. There's one thing I am sure of however. When I make my next record, I hope to be facing the same challenge that I am now. How to make the next performance different from the last is the one thing I always want to be thinking about."

## Cyrus Chestnut

### A Charlie Brown Christmas

The television special *A Charlie Brown Christmas* has aired on CBS every holiday season for the past 35 years, reaching an audience of millions, spanning every generation. Its companion soundtrack, recorded by the Vince Guaraldi Trio and released in 1965 by Fantasy Records, is considered perhaps the most beloved Christmas album of all time.

In this, the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the television special, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peanuts (10/2), Atlantic Records releases its updated version of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, with acclaimed jazz pianist Cyrus Chestnut stepping into Guaraldi's shoes as arranger, bandleader and piano soloist.

It's important to note that Chestnut's *A Charlie Brown Christmas* isn't entirely a remake. The original Guaraldi album functioned as a literal soundtrack to the TV special, featuring the Peanuts characters' voices on "*Christmas Time is Here*" and "*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*," and presenting a relatively chronological audio experience of the show. While our new version starts with the central compositions of the 1965 recording, it brings the music to a new and updated level: in addition to new arrangements by Chestnut himself (including adding a Latin Flavor to Beethoven's widely recognizable "*Für Elise*"), the tracklisting has been completely resequenced and slightly modified. It omits the instrumental version of "*Christmas Time Is Here*," adds vocals to "*The Christmas Song*" and "*What Child Is This?*" and extracts the vocals from "*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*." Chestnut also adds his personal touch to the music with the track "*Me and Charlie Brown*," which he composed especially for this project.

Additionally, the artist lineup of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* transcends the prior core trio to involve a host of other jazz musicians – Kenny Garrett, Michael Brecker, Gary Bartz, Hubert Laws and many others – as well as the established contemporary pop/R&B vocalists Vanessa Williams and Brian McKnight.