



## Florida Theatre Welcomes Ulysses Owens Jr. as its Newest Board Member

**Jacksonville, Fla. (July 24, 2020)** – The historic, nonprofit Florida Theatre welcomes renowned musician Ulysses Owens Jr. as its newest board member. Owens was elected unanimously to a three-year term by the Florida Theatre Board of Directors at their meeting on July 15.

**Ulysses Owens Jr.** is a musician, composer, producer, educator and jazz drummer who The New York Times says, “take(s) a back seat to no one.” A Jacksonville native, he is a graduate of Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, and The Juilliard School, where he received a full scholarship to study in its inaugural jazz program, and is now a faculty member.

The historic Florida Theatre is one of the Top 10 most attended theatres in the country up to 2,000 seats, according to the concert industry trade magazine Pollstar, and is managed by the Florida Theatre Performing Arts Center, Inc., a nonprofit corporation. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors drawn from the civic leadership of the community, who volunteer their time to oversee the policies, governance and finances of the institution. With the addition of Owens, there are currently 24 Board Members serving.

Says Florida Theatre President Numa Saisselin, “We did not currently have an artist on the board, and we have been looking for a potential candidate to fill that slot for a while. To have it wind up being someone of Ulysses’ caliber makes it worth the wait, and it is quite an honor.”

Owens was the drummer on GRAMMY Award-winning albums by vocalist Kurt Elling (*Dedicated to You: Kurt Elling Sings the Music of Coltrane and Hartman*) and the Christian McBride Big Band (*The Good Feeling*). He has also appeared on GRAMMY-nominated albums by the Christian McBride Trio, Gregory Porter and Joey Alexander, and has performed with Nicholas Payton, Wynton Marsalis, Dianne Schurr, Renee Fleming and Mulgrew Miller, to name a few.

He has five albums to his own name. The most recent, *Songs of Music* (2019), featuring the music of Abbey Lincoln, Joni Mitchell, and Nina Simone, was selected by JAZZIZ Magazine as one of 10 Jazz albums to listen to in March 2019. He has also recorded four albums with the New Century Jazz Quintet, a group he co-leads with Japanese pianist Takeshi Ohbayashi, and has produced over 40 recordings for other artists.

Owens has been an Artist-in-Residence at the Park Avenue Armory Conservancy in New York; and has been commissioned by the string quartet ETHEL, Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art. He served as the Jazz Vesper Series Artistic Director at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem from 2012 to 2015, and was the Artistic Music Curator for Minton’s Playhouse, also in Harlem, producing over 85 shows for the jazz club in the fall of 2015.

His honors and award include being named a Rising Star by DownBeat’s Critics Poll for five consecutive years; the 2013 ASCAP Plus Award; the 2014 Global Music Awards Gold Medal; and being a 2015 Jazz at Lincoln Center *Swing!* Awards Honoree.

As an educator, Owens has been a faculty member in The Juilliard School’s Jazz Studies Program since 2016, and remains tightly connected to Don’t Miss a Beat, Inc., the Jacksonville nonprofit founded by his family. As DMAB’s Artistic Director, he helps to empower young people to dream big and give back to their communities through a blend of musical, artistic, academic, and civic engagement programming. He is the co-creator of the Open Studio Network’s online jazz drum video course, *Finding Your Beat*, and Hal Leonard Publishing just released his first drum instructional book.

Owens is a resident of Jacksonville in the Avondale neighborhood.

For more information about Ulysses Owens Jr., visit his official website [usojazzy.com](http://usojazzy.com).

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**The historic, nonprofit Florida Theatre is sponsored by Community First Credit Union. For a complete list of upcoming events or to buy tickets visit the Theatre's official website [floridatheatre.com](http://floridatheatre.com).**

[About Florida Theatre](#): From ballet and opera to contemporary pop, jazz, rock, country and blues the nonprofit Florida Theatre offers 200 cultural and entertainment events annually for every taste and age. More than just an entertainment center, Florida Theatre is also home to graduations, awards ceremonies, lectures, business meetings and charity events that support the community's schools, churches, hospitals and civic groups. As an anchor to downtown development along the beautiful St. Johns River, Florida Theatre draws 250,000 people to Jacksonville's center each year. The magnificently restored Florida Theatre is recognized as one of the finest concert venues in the Southeast. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Florida Theatre holds special memories for four generations. From the Vaudeville acts and silent films of its earliest days to today's blend of performances of all kinds, the Florida Theatre has served as Jacksonville's premier entertainment center since 1927.

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