

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**KestheBand to Headline Jazz at Lincoln Center's  
Third Annual Unity Jazz Festival  
January 8-9 2026**



*Caribbean Icon Kes Leads a Powerful “Mother Africa” Celebration with Special Guest Collaborator and Acclaimed Trinidadian Trumpeter, Etienne Charles*

**For tickets and more information, visit: [jazz.org/unity](https://jazz.org/unity)**

**For live stream information, visit: [jazzlive.com](https://jazzlive.com)**

**OFFICIAL PRESS PHOTO**

New York, NY — **December 8 2025** — Jazz at Lincoln Center proudly announces [KestheBand](#) featuring **Etienne Charles** as the 2026 headliner for the **third annual Unity Jazz Festival**: a celebration dedicated to musical community, global connections through jazz, and cross-cultural storytelling. Taking place January 8–9, 2026 at the iconic **Frederick P. Rose Hall**, also known as *The House Of Swing*, this year’s festival embraces the organization’s 38th Season “**Mother Africa**”- a recognition of the worldwide influence of

Afro-American and African diaspora music traditions, as well as Africa's lasting imprint on jazz.

Known for electrifying performances and boundary-breaking sound, Trinidad and Tobago's **KestheBand** will bring its signature blend of Soca, soul, calypso, and island pop to the Jazz at Lincoln Center stage. The headlining performance is at the epicenter of the legendary group's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, along with additional new music set to roll out in early 2026. The history-making debut will see the band's first-ever stripped-down performances, featuring two intimate sets that feature reimagined arrangements of their music alongside special guest collaborations - including acclaimed Trinidadian trumpeter **Etienne Charles**. Bringing production support to Kes' headlining performance, Charles will infuse the concerts with his signature blend of Afro-Caribbean storytelling and musical craftsmanship. Kes' *Unity Jazz Festival* performance arrives just ahead of the band's highly anticipated new single, "**Rum And Coca Cola**", along with additional new music set to roll out in early 2026.

Listen to "Rum and Coca Cola" [HERE](#).

"Caribbean music has always been a voice of resilience, rhythm, and unity, and stages like Jazz at Lincoln Center give us the chance to share that unique voice with the world," said Kees Dieffenthaler, lead vocalist of **KestheBand**. "Headlining Jazz at Lincoln Center's *United Jazz Festival* is a dream come true for us - we feel so aligned in a bigger purpose," he further explained. KestheBand has also taken an active role in Caribbean relief efforts, following the devastating impact of Hurricane Melissa on Jamaica. The group continues to support fundraising efforts for affected communities, such as the Jamaica Strong Benefit Concert with celebrities such as Shaggy and Inner Circle—continuing their long-standing commitment to uplifting the wider Caribbean family. "It's a timely moment for Caribbean culture to stand proudly on the global stage and remind everyone of the shared roots that connect us."

"Looking forward to bringing Creole Soul to the House of Swing and being a part of Jazz at Lincoln Center's *Unity Jazz Festival*," said Etienne Charles. "I couldn't be more excited to reunite with my brother Kes and continue the creative journey we've shared for years."

For more than three decades, Jazz at Lincoln Center has been a pillar of artistic expression, uniting musicians, fans, students, and educators across cultures and perspectives. *Unity Jazz Festival* invites audiences to experience a carefully curated program that fosters creative exchange and celebrates the dynamic future of jazz.

*Unity Jazz Festival* showcases an exciting lineup of more than 20 acclaimed acts and emerging artists across five stages. With performances celebrating the legacy of legendary **Eddie Palmieri**, along with a first time JALC performances by **DJ Logic**, and sets featuring **Tomeka Reid, Veronica Swift, Erena Terakubo, Gabriel Chakarji, Rajna Swaminathan**. Unity Festival proudly presents the first **Jazz Legacies Fellowship Honors All-Star Concert**, spotlighting over 17 masters of the music: Valerie Capers, Amina Claudine Myers, George Coleman, Akua Dixon, Tom Harrell, Billy Hart, Bertha Hope, Roger Humphries, Carmen Lundy, Roscoe Mitchell, Johnny O'Neal, Shannon Powell, Julian Priest, Herlin Riley, Michele Rosewoman, Dom Slavador and Reggie Workman.

**New this year to the *Unity Jazz Festival*: All-Access Passes** include admission to all *Unity Jazz Festival* performances plus Kes' headlining concerts, with guaranteed entry and assigned seating.

**The Nightly Festival Pass (excludes KestheBand concert)** offers its own world of discovery, providing access to every performance throughout *The House of Swing*—excluding Kes—featuring the Festival's full slate of artists.

All-Access Passes include admission to all *Unity Jazz Festival* performances plus KestheBand' headlining concerts, with guaranteed entry and assigned seating. The Nightly Festival Pass (excludes KestheBand concert) offers its own world of discovery, providing access to every performance throughout *The House of Swing*—excluding KestheBand—featuring the Festival's full slate of artists.

**For tickets and more information, visit: [jazz.org/unity](http://jazz.org/unity)**

**For live stream information, visit: [jazzlive.com](http://jazzlive.com)**

**2026 UNITY JAZZ FESTIVAL SCHEDULE:**

*\*All times are EST\**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 8**

6:30–7:45 p.m.:

FUNMI'S JAM with Stacy Dillard & Brooklyn Circle and Friends

Stage: Ertegun Atrium

8:15–9:30 p.m.:

Erena Terakubo Sextet

Stage: Ertegun Atrium

10:15–11:30 p.m.:

DJ Logic and Friends with Herlin Riley, Luques Curtis, and Nicole Glover

Stage: Ertegun Atrium

7:00–8:30 p.m.:

Jazz Legacies Fellowship Honors All-Star Concert 2026: featuring Valerie Capers, Amina Claudine Myers, George Coleman, Akua Dixon, Tom Harrell, Billy Hart, Bertha Hope, Roger Humphries, Carmen Lundy, Roscoe Mitchell, Johnny O'Neal, Shannon Powell, Julian Priester, Herlin Riley, Michele Rosewoman, Dom Slavador and Reggie Workman

Stage: Rose Theater

9:30–11:00 p.m.:

An Intimate Evening with Kes and Friends

Stage: Rose Theater

7:30–8:45 p.m.:

Tomeka Reid Septet: *In Tribute to Ellington*

Stage: Dizzy's Club

9:30–10:45 p.m.:

Veronica Swift

Stage: Dizzy's Club

11:15P p.m.12:30 a.m.:

Theme for Akiko: Organ Jam Celebrating Akiko Tsuruga

Stage: Dizzy's Club

6:45–7:45 p.m.:

Camila Cortina Trio

Stage: Agnes Varis Studio

8:15–9:15 p.m.:

William Hill III Trio

Stage: Agnes Varis Studio

9:45–10:45 p.m.:

Rajna Swaminathan & Miles Okazaki

Stage: Agnes Varis Studio

### **FRIDAY, JANUARY 9:**

6:30–7:45 p.m.:

Etienne Charles: Gullah Roots

Stage: Ertegun Atrium

8:15–9:30 p.m.:

Gabriel Chakarji Trio

Stage: Ertegun Atrium

10:15–11:30 p.m.:

Solomon Hicks

Stage: Ertegun Atrium

7–8:30 p.m.:

Eddie Palmieri Experience: A Musical Retrospective

Stage: The Appel Room

9:30–11:00 p.m.:

An Intimate Evening with Kes and Friends

Stage: The Appel Room

7:30–8:45 p.m.:

Kate Kortum

Stage: Dizzy's Club

9:30–10:45 p.m.:

Hometown Heroes: New Orleans Own Leroy Jones Quartet with Luther Allison piano TBA,

Yasushi Nakamura, Herlin Riley  
Stage: Dizzy's Club

11:15P.M.–12:30 a.m.:  
Tivon Pennicott and Friends  
Stage: Dizzy's Club

6:45–7:45 p.m.:  
Andre White Trio  
Stage: Agnes Varis Studio

8:15–9:15 p.m.:  
Samir LanGus Trio  
Stage: Agnes Varis Studio

9:45–10:45 p.m.:  
Veronica Leahy & Emmanuel Michael  
Stage: Agnes Varis Studio

*\*Schedule and artists are subject to change*

### **UNITY JAZZ FESTIVAL TICKETING INFORMATION:**

#### **All-Access Pass: Unity Jazz Festival + Kes**

Includes admission to all *Unity Jazz Festival* performances plus the Kes headlining performance on each evening.

#### **- Thursday, January 8 (Rose Theater)**

Orch. **\$175.00** | Mezz. **\$150.00** | Balc. **\$125.00**

#### **- Friday, January 9 (The Appel Room)**

Orch. **\$150.00** | Mezz. **\$125.00**

#### **Nightly Festival Pass (Excluding Kes concert)**

Provides entry to all *Unity Jazz Festival* performances excluding entry to the Kes headlining performance.

- Thursday, January 8: **\$75.00**

- Friday, January 9: **\$75.00**

*\*Please note that a \$5.00 Jazz at Lincoln Center Facility Fee applies to all ticket purchases. A \$7 handling fee also applies when purchasing tickets from CenterCharge or when purchasing tickets online via [jazz.org](http://jazz.org).\**

*Unity Jazz Festival* tickets can be purchased through [jazz.org](http://jazz.org) 24 hours a day or through CenterCharge at 212-721-6500, open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Tickets can also be purchased at the Jazz at Lincoln Center Box Office, located on Broadway at 60th Street, Ground Floor.

Jazz at Lincoln Center Box Office hours are:  
Tuesday-Sunday: 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Monday: Closed

### END ###

### About Jazz at Lincoln Center

Jazz at Lincoln Center's 38th season, *Mother Africa*, delves into the creative spirit that unites African and American musical traditions, and runs through June 20, 2026. The organization's 2025-26 season includes 19 unique weekends of Jazz at Lincoln Center concerts in the 1233-seat Rose Theater, nine concerts in the 467-seat Appel Room, and more than 350 nights of music at Dizzy's Club, in addition to webcast performances and in-person and virtual education programs. The 2025-26 season also features tour dates worldwide by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, an ensemble of 15 virtuoso instrumentalists, unique soloists, composers, arrangers, and educators whose mandate is to coalesce and animate an unprecedented variety of styles and genres, in collaboration with noted guest artists and appearances by major figures in jazz and its related genres.

### About KestheBand

Hailing from Trinidad and Tobago, KestheBand is one of the world's most influential music groups, known for its vibrant blend of soca, calypso, reggae, R&B, and global pop. Led by frontman Kees Dieffenthaler (Kes), the band has captivated audiences worldwide with hits such as "Hello," "Wotless," and "Savannah Grass." Celebrated for their soulful vocals, infectious energy, and boundary-pushing artistry, KestheBand continues to elevate Caribbean music on the international stage through dynamic live performances, community impact, and genre-expanding new releases.

*Jazz at Lincoln Center proudly acknowledges its 2025-26 season partners:  
Bloomberg Philanthropies and United Airlines*

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