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NEWS SOURCE

Najee to headline Tubman African American Museum's "All That Jazz" fundraiser

By LAURA SHIRLEY

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Najee, who was recently nominated for a 2014 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Album, will perform Saturday at the City Auditorium for the Tubman African American Museum's 18th annual "All That Jazz" fundraiser.

Having award-winning musician Najee perform at the Tubman African American Museum's 18th annual "All That Jazz" fundraiser is a dream come true.

"Every year, we take suggestions from the committee and board and come up with a dream list of performers, and then we talk to the different companies to see who's available," Tubman Director of Sales and Marketing Nicole Thurston said of the event, being held Saturday at the City Auditorium. "I think it gets better and better every year. Najee is a Grammy-nominated jazz genius, and everyone who attends will get a real treat."

And that is a sentiment the artist himself echoed.

"This is the first concert of 2014 for me, and I think everyone will love what we do. It should be a really nice concert," Najee said, adding that it has been several years since he has played in Macon.

Najee was born and raised in New York City and grew up listening to music in his home, where his mother was “an avid music fan.” He played all through school, and a disagreement with his brother set him on the path to greatness.

“I wasn’t fond of the soprano saxophone, it has the smallest, the highest of all the voices, and I mainly played the tenor sax and flute. But he said if I wanted to play on his songs, I would play soprano, and lo and behold, that would be what most people came to know me for,” Najee said.

He turned professional at age 18, embarking on a world tour. He has collaborated with Chaka Khan, Freddie Jackson, Stanley Clarke and Larry Carlton, among many others. Najee’s latest album, “The Morning After: A Musical Love Journey,” was released last fall and debuted as the No. 1 contemporary jazz album on the Billboard charts, and he was recently nominated for a 2014 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Album.

“I am always honored when people pay attention to me that way, and I am looking forward to hearing the results,” he said.

Now in its 18th year, the “All That Jazz” fundraiser benefits educational programs of the Tubman.

“We provide a wide range of programs at the museum with summer camp, workshops, math and reading programs, and tours, and we do substantial outreach, taking visual and performing arts to schools. Over the last five years, we have refocused on education, both on and off site,” museum executive director Andy Ambrose said, adding that the fundraising event has grown as well.

“We now try to bring in a big name artist, making it more of a concert and giving folks a chance to dance. It’s becoming a signature event for Macon and an outstanding event for us,” Ambrose said.

Doors open at 7 p.m., and the GQ Band will perform before Najee takes the stage. AJ the DJ will play music for a dance party after the concert until about 10:30 p.m., Thurston said.

“All That Jazz”

When: 7 p.m. Jan. 25

Where: City Auditorium, 415 First St.

Cost: \$25 balcony admission; \$20 student balcony admission; \$125 floor seats

Information: 478-743-8544