

EDMONDS CENTER *for the* ARTS



Julia Keefe Indigenous Jazz Ensemble

JANUARY 14

*Sponsored by
Leslie & Mike Foley*

Band Bio

The Julia Keefe Indigenous Jazz Ensemble (JKIJE) is a nine-piece iteration of the Julia Keefe Indigenous Big Band, an ensemble of Native and Indigenous jazz musicians from across Indian Country. Performing pieces from their under-appreciated predecessors in jazz, like Mildred Bailey (Coeur d'Alene) and Jim Pepper (Kaw/Mvskoke), alongside works by contemporary Indigenous composers, the band spotlights a vibrant, long-standing tradition of Indigenous improvised music today.

Led by the celebrated vocalist and luminary Julia Keefe (Nez Perce), the ensemble brings charisma, passion, and purpose to every stage, leaving audiences both inspired and educated. JKIJ E features a 'who's who' of Indigenous bandleaders today, and has performed at marquee events including the 2024 Monterey Jazz Festival.

Band Statement

Indigenous jazz musicians, ensembles, and big bands have their place in the contemporary jazz world and jazz history. Following 19th-century federal policies to remove Indian children from their homes and indoctrinate them into European culture (Indian Boarding Schools), small ensembles and big bands began to flourish on reservations across the US and Canada in the first half of the Twentieth Century. Indigenous musicians started to ascend to celebrity with jazz as their medium – including Russell “Big Chief” Moore, Mildred Bailey, Oscar Pettiford, and Jim Pepper – but were never duly credited as Indigenous visionaries in the genre.

From time immemorial, songs have been the vessels of stories and lessons for the Indigenous people of the Americas. The goals of the Julia Keefe Indigenous Big Band are to celebrate and continue that tradition, to compose and perform new music inspired by traditional backgrounds, and to create a community of like-minded peoples from all backgrounds to uplift the next generation of Indigenous jazz musicians.

Indigenous cultures are not monolithic; many cultures carry traditions and songs as old and sacred as the next. The Julia Keefe Indigenous Big Band reflects a wide range of Indigenous identities, from South America to Canada, Northeast to Southwest. Together, we represent a long-silenced, long-forgotten chapter of jazz history: the participation, contribution, innovation, and legacy of Indigenous jazz musicians. A legacy that seasoned composers and arrangers Julia Keefe and

co-founder Delbert Anderson (Diné) carry forward through original works inspired by songs and rhythms of their Native heritage reimagined through the language and stylings of jazz.

It is a rarity to see a single Indigenous jazz musician nowadays, let alone sixteen, on stage. The Julia Keefe Indigenous Big Band celebrates the diversity and vitality of Indigenous peoples in jazz: past, present, and future. It is the bridge for people everywhere to see themselves on the bandstand regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, or socio-economic status.

The JKIBB premiered at the Washington Center for the Performing Arts in May 2022. The premiere performance was made possible with the support of Jazz Road, a national initiative of South Arts, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation with additional support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Himacus Qeci'Yew'Yew (Thank you so much) for your support of Indigenous artists.



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