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**SUBJECT: GRACE KELLY JAZZ QUINTET PLAYS BACKSTAGE SERIES AT JASPER ARTS CENTER**

Grace Kelly and her jazz quintet will play Backstage on Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. at the Jasper Arts Center. Called the "music infusion master," "Grace Kelly plays with intelligence, wit and feeling. She has a great amount of natural ability and *the* ability to adapt that is the hallmark of a first-class jazz musician. "***Wynton Marsalis***.

When it comes to singer/ saxophonist/ composer/ lyricist/ arranger/ producer/ educator Grace Kelly, people seem to be divided into two groups: those who marvel at her proficiency, creativity and ever-accelerating growth, and those who have yet to encounter the 21-year-old wunderkind. Kelly has been voted "Best Jazz Act" in Boston four consecutive years in the FNX/Phoenix Best Music Poll, and then voted Best National Jazz Act in 2012. She has received the ASCAP Foundation's Young Jazz Composers Award in 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2013 and won "Jazz Artist of the Year" at the Boston Music Awards in both 2008 and 2010. The 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 Downbeat Critics Poll added her to the list naming her one of the "Alto Saxophone Rising Stars", the youngest artist ever to be named to the music poll.

After releasing eight full length albums Grace released her first single "Sweet Sweet Baby" which has made it to #10 on the Billboard Magazine "Smooth Jazz Song Charts." On *Live at Scullers*, her newest and eighth release, Kelly offers a set mostly composed of new material which shows off her remarkable versatility. Her sax chops have been granted the imprimatur of jazz elders like Phil Woods and Lee Konitz, both of whom have recorded with her. But here, Kelly's instrumental virtuosity shares the spotlight with her winsome voice via her most song-oriented collection to date.

Kelly boldly offers her mission statement on the opening track, "Please Don't Box Me In." The title plea is made by a gifted musician and songwriter who sees no reason why the music she makes should be more single-minded than the music that she enjoys.

"I listen to a wide range of music, from Miles Davis to John Mayer," Kelly explains. "Lately I've been listening to more contemporary music and songwriters and at the same time I've been more inspired to write songs. Growing up and learning the saxophone, I always listened more to singers than instrumentalists. Whenever I play a standard I always make sure to know the lyrics behind it. I feel like words are a really big connection between myself and the audience."

Born Grace Chung on May 15, 1992, she became Grace Kelly after her mother divorced and remarried and her stepfather, Bob Kelly, legally adopted Grace and her sister Christina. Grace began piano lessons at age six, and she still does much of her composing at the piano as she sings wordlessly. Singing, dancing, writing songs and theater were also early passions, soon joined by a fascination with the recordings of Stan Getz and other jazz saxophonists that her parents played during Sunday brunches. She began to study the clarinet at her elementary school in the fourth grade, and began private saxophone lessons a few months later. Further inspiration was provided by vocalist Ann Hampton Callaway, who detected "the boundless spirit and imagination of a natural artist" when she met Kelly in 2002. Another early champion, middle school music teacher Ken Berman, was so inspired by the pre-teen's playing and writing that he insisted, "you have to record." What followed was her first disc, *Dreaming*. "The CD release took place on March 17, 2004, when I was 12," she recalls, "and as soon as I walked on stage, I realized that performing was my favorite thing to do."

"Through music, I feel like I'm channeling spiritual energy that I hope passes on to people and it's been an amazing experience to see how people have been moved by this music. Since this is the gift I've been blessed with I feel that it's very important to share it."

Kelly recently graduated Boston's Berklee College of Music at age 19. "I auditioned for Berklee and received a full scholarship, I got my GED and started college at 16. It's been great, playing all the time and just living music all day. I'm learning so much and I'm playing all kinds of music. It was a challenge to balance college with all the touring I do with my band but I was able to do both." Grace has taught residency workshops at Berklee College since 2012.

Since age 12 Grace has performed over 600 concerts as a leader all around the world at prominent venues such as the Hollywood Bowl, Montreal Jazz Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Apollo Theater, Birdland, Boston's Symphony Hall, Montreux Jazz Festival, Dizzy's Club Cocoa Cola, Ronnie Scott's (London), Porgy & Bess (Vienna), Scullers Jazz Club, and in venues as far away as Europe and Asia. She has also released seven full-length albums and recorded with other artists as well.

Without hesitation, Grace Kelly will tell you that her goal is "to stay in jazz but also do different things, bigger arrangements, like Stevie Wonder and George Benson." Monty Alexander says, "She is not an artist for Jazz lovers only but one for the whole world." Her ambition has yet to outstrip her talent, and Grace manifests only the beginning of the young artist's quest to continue to reinvent herself. As Ann Hampton Callaway predicts, "There is no telling how far this child prodigy will go with the limitless possibilities of her voluminous talents."

Tickets are still available and may be purchased by calling the box office at Jasper Community arts at 812-482-3070. For more information, please check our website at [www.jasperarts.org](http://www.jasperarts.org).

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