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Four-time GRAMMY® Award winner @officialkcs (Facebook and Twitter)/@karenclarksheard (Instagram) joins musician, vocalist, and composer @DamienLSneed (Facebook)/@DamienSneed (Instagram and Twitter) and @ivaleriesimpson (Twitter) to honor the legendary queen of soul, Aretha Franklin @KimmelICC (Twitter)/@KimmelCulturalCampus (Facebook and Instagram) on 3/18. For more info, visit kimmelculturalcampus.org.

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**KIMMEL CULTURAL CAMPUS PRESENTS
THE POWERFUL, ONE-OF-A-KIND CELEBRATION
A TRIBUTE TO ARETHA FRANKLIN:
THE QUEEN OF SOUL
MARCH 18, 2022**

**Starring Vocalist & Franklin mentee Damien Sneed,
Gospel legend Karen Clark Sheard,
and Ashford & Simpson's Valerie Simpson**

Includes hits "Respect", "Precious Memories", "Natural Woman", and more

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (January 13, 2022) – The Kimmel Cultural Campus presents musician, vocalist, composer, and mentee of Aretha Franklin, Damien Sneed, alongside gospel legend Karen Clark Sheard and singer/songwriter Valerie Simpson, in ***A Tribute to Aretha Franklin: The Queen of Soul***, at the Campus' Merriam Theater on Friday, March 18, 2022 at 8:00 p.m.

Recognized as the most successful female recording artist in history, Aretha Franklin truly earned her title, "The Queen of Soul." Her legendary career began in the Baptist congregations of Detroit where her expressive and powerful vocals and skillfully executed piano melodies garnered her international stardom in the 1960s. Her music continues to span generations and a multitude of genres. Beloved by musicians and listeners alike, Aretha has 112 charted singles on Billboard, 18 Grammy Awards, and over 75 million records sold.

In *A Tribute to Aretha Franklin: The Queen of Soul*, Damien Sneed, Karen Clark Sheard, and Valerie Simpson, backed by an accomplished cast of jazz, gospel, and soul musicians, pay

homage to the monarch herself with fresh renditions of her most cherished hits including “Respect,” “Knew You Were Waiting,” “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” “Precious Memories,” “Think,” “Until You Come Back To Me,” “Daydreaming,” “Freeway,” “Natural Woman,” and others.

“Aretha Franklin’s lasting legacy cannot be understated,” said Matías Tarnopolsky, president and CEO of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc. “It is an honor to celebrate her with a lineup of talented artists who keep her music and spirit alive.”

Aretha Franklin performed at the Cadillac Club in North Philly and the Uptown Theater on North Broad. She graced the stage of the Kimmel Cultural Campus on December 29, 2014, and in 2015, Aretha sang “Amazing Grace” on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway for Pope Francis. Her August 2017 performance at the Mann Center was one of her last performances, anywhere.

Deeply committed to the health and safety of guests, artists, and staff and proudly certified by GBAC, the gold standard for infection prevention programs, the Kimmel Cultural Campus is requiring masks to be worn at all times for guests attending on-Campus events, as well as proof of vaccination for those over 5. Guests under 5 will be required to show a negative PCR test result or negative rapid test. Additional details below.

Artist information below:

Joining the tour will be four-time Grammy® Award winner and multiple Stellar and Dove Award winner Karen Clark Sheard. A gospel music legend and a part of a musical dynasty, Clark Sheard is renowned throughout the music industry for her one-of-a-kind multi-octave vocal range and ability. Her musical style, both with the legendary Clark Sisters and as a solo artist, has inspired a host of today’s brightest pop divas, including Queen Latifah, Beyoncé, Mariah Carey, Missy Elliott, and Faith Evans, among countless others.

Through the years, The Clark Sisters have recorded 20 albums, including GMA Dove Award-winner and Grammy® Award-nominated *Heart and Soul* (1987) and Grammy® Award-nominated *Conqueror* (1988) and *Sincerely* (1983), while crafting enduring gospel anthems such as “Endow Me,” “Pray for the USA,” “Name It Claim It” and “Is My Living in Vain?” .

In 1997, Clark Sheard launched a solo career with *Finally Karen* on Island Black Music. An instant hit, it sold nearly half a million copies, garnered four Stellar Awards (Female Vocalist of the Year, Contemporary Female Vocalist of the Year, Music Video of the Year, and Best Children’s Performance for “Will of God,” featuring daughter Kierra Sheard) and a Grammy nomination. Clark Sheard continued her solo career with other hit CDs, including *2nd Chance* (Elektra, 2002), *The Heavens Are Telling* (Elektra, 2003), and the GMA Dove Award winner, *It’s Not Over* (Word Records, 2006).

In 2007, she reunited with her sisters, The Clark Sisters, for their No. 1 comeback album, *Live...One Last Time* (EMI Gospel), for which The Clark Sisters won the 2008 Grammy Award for Best Gospel Album. They won a second Grammy for Best Gospel Performance for “Blessed and Highly Favored,” the lead single from that album. Clark Sheard, who wrote and led the song, won a third Grammy that year for Best Gospel Song (a Writer’s Award). The Clark Sisters were part of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Grammy Awards that year, joining Aretha Franklin, BeBe Winans, and others as performers for the evening.

In 2010, Clark Sheard stepped away from her solo recording work to record “Wait On The Lord,” a duet with Donnie McClurkin from his album, *We Are All One*. The record won a Grammy Award for Best Gospel Performance, raising Clark Sheard’s Grammy Award total to four.

Lifetime honored The Clark Sisters in a biopic titled *The Clark Sisters: The First Ladies of Gospel*, which details their humble beginnings, struggles to find their place, to later becoming the best-selling Gospel group in the music world. The movie first aired in April 2020 and featured re-recordings of some of The Clark Sisters' biggest hits like "You Brought The Sunshine." The biopic earned raves for its actresses, including Clark-Sheard's daughter and fellow gospel songstress Kierra Sheard.

Damien Sneed, having once toured alongside Franklin, is a pianist, organist, conductor, composer, producer, arranger, and arts educator. He has worked with many other musical legends, including Wynton Marsalis, Jessye Norman, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, and Ashford & Simpson. Sneed has also served as music director for Grammy® Award-winning gospel artists The Clark Sisters. He is featured on the recording of Wynton Marsalis' *Abyssinian Mass* as a conductor along with Marsalis, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and Chorale Le Chateau.

Sneed's most recent studio recording is *Damien Sneed: Unplugged*, an all-gospel collection of soulful and inspirational songs, recorded in a spare studio setting with Sneed on piano and vocals alongside several noted vocalists, including Chenee Campbell, Linny Smith, Tiffany Stevenson, and Matia Washington. In January 2020, Sneed released his debut classical album, *Classically Harlem and We Shall Overcome Deluxe* on his boutique label, LeChateau Earl Records, which was established in 2009 to reflect his varied musical interests. Previous recordings also include *Jazz In Manhattan* (September 2019); *The Three Sides of Damien Sneed: Classical, Jazz and Sanctified Soul* (July 2018); *Broken To Minister: The Deluxe Edition* (March 2015); *Spiritual Sketches* (June 2013); and *Introspections LIVE* (January 2010). Sneed is a 2020 Dove Award winner for his work as a featured producer and writer on The Clark Sisters' project, *The Return*, released on March 13, 2020.

Valerie Simpson is half of the songwriting-performing-producing entity known as Ashford & Simpson, an award-winning collaboration with her late husband Nick Ashford that began in the 1960s. Together they have penned such classic hits as "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," "You're All I Need to Get By," "Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand," "I'm Every Woman," "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing," "Solid," and "Your Precious Love." The music of Ashford & Simpson are in constant play through commercials and documentaries (Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston), feature films and television shows. Ashford & Simpson have rightfully earned their place in the Songwriters Hall of Fame, where the duo was inducted in 2002.

Simpson serves on the board of the ASCAP Foundation where a monetary award, the REACH OUT AND TOUCH Award honoring Nick Ashford, has been established to aid struggling songwriters. In recent years, Valerie has toured with Dave Koz as a special guest and with Paul Shaffer & The World's Most Dangerous Band. Four Ashford & Simpson songs are featured in the Broadway hit *Motown: The Musical*, which is touring the country. "I'm Every Woman" is featured in *The Bodyguard: The Musical*, which is currently on tour. In 2018, Simpson was featured in a limited engagement in Broadway's *CHICAGO, The Musical*, in the role of Mama Morton. The songs of Ashford & Simpson are in constant play through commercials and documentaries (Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston), feature films, and television shows. Ashford & Simpson have rightfully earned their place in the Songwriters Hall of Fame, where the duo was inducted in 2002. In 2019, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences presented the Trustees Award to Ashford & Simpson in a televised program adding yet another exciting new dimension to a diversified career. Valerie Simpson owns and runs the popular New York City's Ashford & Simpson's Sugar Bar, a restaurant and music club, where young writers-singers-musicians have a platform to perform.

Other featured upcoming performances at the Kimmel Cultural Campus include **Arnetta Johnson** (March 19, 2022, Perelman Theater), **Fran Lebowitz** (March 19, 2022, Merriam

Theater), ***The Simon & Garfunkel Story*** (March 24 – 25, 2022, Merriam Theater), and **Diana Krall** (April 8, 2022, Academy of Music).

Tickets

Tickets can be purchased by calling 215-893-1999 or online at www.kimmelculturalcampus.org. In-person ticket sales can be conducted daily from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. at the Academy of Music Box Office, located at 240 S. Broad Street. See www.kimmelculturalcampus.org for more information.

A Tribute to Aretha Franklin: The Queen of Soul

Kimmel Cultural Campus' Merriam Theater
March 18, 2022, 8:00 p.m.

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Safe & Clean Commitment + Flexible Ticket Policy

The Kimmel Cultural Campus is proudly certified by the [Global Biorisk Advisory Council](#) – the gold standard for cleaning, disinfection, and infection prevention programs.

We will always put the safety of our guests, artists, and staff first, and we have worked closely with partners, producers, artists, guests and other performing arts centers around the nation to develop the most comprehensive plan to safely reopen our doors. We are committing to a healthy and clean environment with increased disinfection, enhanced ventilation, and will enforce recommended health authority guidelines, including masks and proof of vaccination.

Masks are required to be worn at all times when on the Kimmel Cultural Campus, except when actively consuming food or beverage in designated locations. Prolonged periods of mask removal are not permitted.

All attendees for public events must show proof of full vaccination at the time of entry, with valid photo ID and copy of vaccination card (physical or photo). Proof of negative COVID-19 tests will not be accepted, with the exception of children under the age of 5, effective January 17; children under 5 will be required to show a negative PCR test or negative rapid result. While rapid tests (taken within 48 hours of event) are accepted, and PCR tests are preferred (taken within 72 hours of event). Our position on vaccine mandates for children under the age of 5 may change as the larger population gets vaccinated.

This policy is subject to change based upon guidance from the CDC and local health authorities. For more information on our [Safe & Clean Commitment](#) and the most up-to-date information about our policies, please visit kimmelculturalcampus.org.

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KIMMEL CULTURAL CAMPUS

Located in the heart of Center City, Philadelphia, our mission is to engage the region's diverse communities with art through performance and education. Our Cultural Campus serves more than 1-million guests per year and includes Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts (Verizon Hall, Perelman Theater, and SEI Innovation Studio), the Academy of Music, and the Merriam Theater – representing more than 160 years of rich history for the performing arts along Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts. We are home to eight esteemed Resident Companies: The Philadelphia Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Ballet, The Philly POPS, PHILADANCO, The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and Curtis Institute of Music. With nearly 9,000 seats per night, we are the region's most impactful performing arts center, and the second largest in the country. Our Cultural Campus serves as a

preeminent and inclusive place to enjoy exceptional experiences that reflect the spirit of our region by cultivating a creative and socially responsible environment where our community shares experiences that are delivered with pride, integrity, and respect. As a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization, we collaborate on, present, and produce a broad range of relevant and meaningful events, we serve as an active gathering space for social and community events, we educate the region's young people through access to quality arts experiences, and we provide support to artists in the creation of new work. TD Bank, America's Most Convenient Bank, is the proud Kimmel Cultural Campus Season Sponsor. Read Kimmel Cultural Campus' vision statement, world view, and mission statement [here](#). Learn more about our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and how it encompasses our mission, co-workers, and programs [here](#).

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For photography, please visit <https://kcccpres.smugmug.com>