

TD Jazz Concerts

SuperBlue: Kurt Elling & Charlie Hunter

Saturday, March 28, 2026 at 8pm

This is the 1,515th concert in Koerner Hall

Kurt Elling, vocals

Charlie Hunter, hybrid guitar

Kenny Banks Jr., keyboards

Marcus Finnie, drums

Kurt Elling

Kurt Elling is a two-time Grammy Award winner who is renowned for a signature, rich sound, and an inventive and individualized body of work. With a one-of-a kind brand of contemporary beat lyricism and vocalese-writing ingenuity, the Chicago-based musician has extended the parameters of vocal jazz and enlarged its vocabulary. *The New York Times* called Kurt Elling “the standout male jazz vocalist of our time.” *The Guardian* (UK) pronounced him “a kind of Sinatra with superpowers.” Over a 25-year career of touring and recording, Elling has won three Prix du Jazz Vocal (France), two German Echo Awards, two Dutch Edison Awards, and has been nominated for a Grammy Award 16 times. He has had a 14-year run atop the *DownBeat* Critics and Readers polls, and has won 12 Jazz Journalists Awards for Male Vocalist of the Year. Currently, Elling is on Broadway, starring as Hermes in the Tony Award-winning musical *Hadestown*.

Elling’s work with other leading figures in the jazz world has included important collaborations with Branford Marsalis, Danilo Pérez, Fred Hersch, Charlie Hunter, and Stefon Harris. He has also performed as a featured soloist with many of the world’s leading large ensembles, including the NY Philharmonic, the BBC Concert Symphony, the Count Basie Orchestra, the WDR Big Band and Orchestra, the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, and the Village Vanguard Orchestra.

In addition to his work as a lyricist and composer for his own ensembles, Kurt Elling has co-created multi-disciplinary performances for Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theater and The City of Chicago. Jazz at Lincoln Center saw the world premiere of *The Big Blind*, an entirely new jazz musical Elling is co-writing with collaborator Phil Galdston (*Save The Best For Last*). National Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky declared that, “In Kurt Elling’s art, the voice of jazz gives new spiritual presence to the ancient, sweet and powerful bond between poetry and music.”

Elling has toured the world in a variety of contexts, including UNESCO-sponsored International Jazz Day performances in Havana, Cuba, in St. Petersburg, Russia, in Melbourne, Australia, and in Washington, DC. He has twice performed at the White House, including a performance in collaboration with the late Marvin Hamlisch and the National Symphony Orchestra for President Obama’s first State Dinner. He has served as artist-in-residence at the Monterey and Singapore Jazz Festivals. As a music industry leader, Elling spent six years serving as a Trustee and two years as Vice Chairman of The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Charlie Hunter

Charlie Hunter is a guitarist, producer, and composer celebrated for his innovative approach to the instrument. He gained widespread recognition for his pioneering technique on an eight-string guitar, which he custom designed to simultaneously play bass lines, melodies, and chords. Currently, he performs on 6- and 7-string guitars built by Hybrid Guitars Co., a company he co-founded in 2015 with luthiers Clay Conner and Wes Lambe to create fanned-fret instruments tailored to his specifications.

Hunter’s eclectic style seamlessly blends elements of jazz, funk, blues, and rock, creating a distinct sound that has captivated audiences worldwide. His mastery of rhythm, tone, and improvisation has earned him critical acclaim and a devoted following. Over the course of his 35-year career, he has released numerous albums and collaborated with a diverse array of artists, from jazz legends to contemporary innovators.

A defining force in contemporary jazz, funk, and blues, Hunter has established himself as a versatile collaborator, producer, and bandleader. His work with *SuperBlue*, alongside vocalist Kurt Elling, has received critical

praise for its electrifying fusion of jazz, funk, and groove-driven improvisation. In recent years, Hunter has been touring extensively, with notable appearances at major international festivals, venues, and performing arts centres.

In 2024, he continued to work with artists including Victoria Victoria, Butcher Brown, Jubu Smith & Calvin Napper, Sam Fribush, Maritzaida, and Candice Ivory. Hunter appeared on Tiny Desk alongside Cartoons, Kiefer, and Nate Smith, further showcasing his ability to fuse genres and push musical boundaries. His 2025 projects include *Different Strokes for Different Folks* – a duo album with the guitarist-composer Ella Feingold; *A 1966 Fender Mustang Songbook* – a deeply personal project featuring Hunter on the Fender Mustang guitar; and a collaborative album with Andy Randazzo, Corey Fonville, and DJ Harrison of Butcher Brown, fusing deep grooves with contemporary jazz and funk.

Beyond performing, Hunter is also deeply involved in music production and education. During the pandemic, he launched Wheelhouse Beats, a revolutionary metronome app featuring some of today's top drummers. He also founded SideHustle Records, a label and artist development house dedicated to nurturing emerging talent and ensuring artists retain control over their creative output. Since 2022, Hunter has immersed himself in the music of Arthur "Blind" Blake, sharing his discoveries and interpretations on his Patreon page. With an ever-evolving sound and a relentless drive to explore new musical territories, Charlie Hunter remains one of the most forward-thinking and influential guitarists of his generation.

Kurt Elling made his Royal Conservatory debut on May 10, 2014, and Charlie Hunter is making his Conservatory debut.