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Steppin' Out with Lalah Hathaway [\[EMAIL | PRINT | SHARE \]](#) this Saturday



Lalah Hathaway will headline the Steppin' Out gala at the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel this Saturday. Earlier this year, Hathaway released "Self Portrait," the most successful record of her career. (Photo courtesy of Stax Records/Concord Music)

Kevin T. Cox

Thousands of New England's movers and shakers will be movin' and shakin' on Saturday night at the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel at the annual Steppin' Out gala fundraiser.

Steppin' Out has become one of Boston's most eagerly anticipated fundraising events, with proceeds going to The Dimock Center. This year's event features an impressive lineup of talented local and national entertainers representing genres ranging from rhythm & blues and jazz to Latin and gospel music.

Scheduled performers include jazz bassist and vocalist Esperanza Spalding, vocalist Larry Watson, saxophonist Andre Ward, R&B/pop star Amel Larrieux, Julia Nixon from the cast of the Broadway musical "Dreamgirls," drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, and bandleader/tuba player Kendrick Oliver and his 20-piece New Life Orchestra.

Headlining this year's event is R&B songstress Lalah Hathaway. The Chicago native and Berklee College of Music alum has thrilled fans with her smooth mix of R&B and jazz vocal styles for almost 20 years.

Earlier this year, Hathaway released "Self Portrait," the most successful record of her career thus far, debuting in the top 10 on Billboard's R&B chart.

"It's going really well," she said. "I'm really proud of that record. I'm still excited about it. It's probably my best record — it's the record that I have put the most of myself into, and I think it's the most truthful, the most reflective of who I am as an artist."

Hathaway told the Banner she is very excited about performing at Steppin' Out, and is particularly interested in seeing some of the other performers.

"I've gotten into Esperanza Spalding in the last year or so," said Hathaway. "It will be great to see and hear her, great to see a chick playing bass. I'm looking forward to meeting her."

Hathaway is also excited to see some old friends.

"I've known Terri Lyne Carrington for 20 years almost," she said. "One of the first tours I ever went out on, Terri was the drummer and that's how I got to know her. I've been on the road with Herbie Hancock when she was playing with him. I've known her a long, long time."

The daughter of soul icon Donny Hathaway, Lalah offered a warm, friendly laugh when asked how she decided to become a singer.

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"It never was a decision, it was always just what I did," she explained. "From the time I was a little girl, I was always doing something creative, and the focal point of that was music because I was the child of two musicians. ... It's always been the natural trajectory of my life.

"There was never a day that I decided to make music a career ... It's just my passion and what I do best and what I do most naturally. I'm really lucky that it is a career for me, that I can do what I love and make a living."

After attending Chicago's Performing Arts High School, Hathaway came to Boston to study at the prestigious Berklee College of Music, where her classmates included Delfeayo Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, Susan Tedeschi and Paula Cole.

"I had a really good time in Boston, so much so that I wrote a song about it," said Hathaway, referring to "Boston," the closing track off her 2004 album "Outrun the Sky."

"It's like an old friend and I'm very nostalgic when I'm there," she continued. "I find it to be a really cool city that you can walk, kind of like a city and a town: great food, lots of culture, lots of art, a lot of students — and I think that's the main thing, a lot of young people."

While she has experienced some commercial success, many critics and fans have called Hathaway an underrated talent. But don't tell her that.

"People tell me I'm underappreciated," she said with a laugh. "And sometimes I feel like that commercially. But the people I play for — they really get it. I'd almost rather have 1,000 people really get it than 10,000 people kinda sorta get it.

"But it's hard, you know, because once you decide to take money for it, you're already [messed] up from the beginning. Having said that, you just try to keep it as real as possible, and that's the line that you tread as an artist, as a musician; and sometimes that means that not as many people know who you are."

The annual Steppin' Out gala fundraiser benefiting The Dimock Center will be held Saturday, Nov. 8. A sponsor reception and dinner runs from 6 to 9 p.m., while the gala event and performances start at 8 p.m. and end at 2 a.m. General admission tickets are available by phone at 866-468-7619 and directly from The Dimock Center, located at 55 Dimock Street, Roxbury.

For complete event information, visit www.dimock.org.

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