

# PATTI AUSTIN TO PERFORM AT THE 49TH ANNUAL ODYSSEY BALL

Grammy winner Patti Austin crosses all musical genres, has seventeen solo albums, and has performed on the Grammys and the Oscars. As a performer, songwriter and vocalist her star-studded career has spanned decades, making her one of the most beloved artists in the world and a mainstay on the Billboard Jazz Albums charts.

On November 13, Austin will perform for guests of the 2015 Odyssey Ball fundraiser at NOMA. This annual black-tie celebration, which raises funds for NOMA's exhibitions, initiatives, and programs, will feature a seated dinner in the Great Hall hosted by event chairs Robin Burgess and Terence Blanchard.

This year's Odyssey, presented by IBERIABANK and WDSU-TV, also serves as the premier viewing of *Visions of US: American Art at NOMA*, featuring works by Ansel Adams, John Singleton Copley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, John Singer Sargent, Andy Warhol and others. The night will close with an after party presented by Chevron featuring DJ Soul Sister.

*Arts Quarterly* spoke with Austin about her career and upcoming performance. To purchase tickets, visit [noma.org](http://noma.org) or contact 504.658.4163.

## **You grew up surrounded by legendary musicians: your godparents, Quincy Jones and Dinah Washington, your father, jazz trombonist Gordon Austin...what was that like?**

The older I get the more I realize the magnitude of the company I kept at that time, and how influential it was on me. But you know, when you're in a painting you can't see it. But now, I just think, "Oh my god, Dinah Washington was my godmother! What the hell does that mean?!" Sammy Davis Jr. was one of the first people to encourage me in my career other than Dinah and Quincy. There was also Ray Bolger, Rosemary Clooney, Mel Tormé... These are the kind of people I

got to work with when I was coming up in this business, so I got a grade-A education, one that never ceases. When you think you've learned everything you can do on stage, you have a moment like I had last year, when I had the honor of opening for Smokey Robinson in the Bay Area. I had finished my show and stayed to watch his, and I think that's when I finally got my doctorate degree. It was just amazing. I'm blessed to have come up at a time when every innovator in this business was still alive and still doing it.

## **What keeps you motivated as an entertainer today?**

I am extremely blessed that I get to sing all over the world. I just came back from Poland. The people there are lovely, and they love jazz. They love jazz in Germany, Italy, all over Europe, and in Asia. One reason I love performing internationally is that audiences outside of the States tend to have a wider spectrum of music appreciation than we do here. I think a lot of it is because we don't get the same music education in the States now than we did when I was a kid. It's usually one of the first things cut from school budgets when the economy gets funky, along with art and athletic programs. I performed for an audience in Japan, and the demographic of the audience was between 8 and 80. Same thing happens in China, Europe, and Africa, but not in the States. I can't do a show at a jazz festival in the States and throw some pop in there because it's not generally acceptable. I do it anyway to prove that it doesn't matter what the genre is, if it's great it becomes undeniable, people get it. If I'm doing it the right way, I can make you listen to heavy metal and you'll adore it. One of the numbers I've started



doing is a Depeche Mode tune. I'm working with a trio and we'll probably do that song in New Orleans. People often say, I can't believe you would do that kind of song, and what a cool way to do it! And that's inspiring. I'm always trying to introduce new things to myself and explore it and learn it, and then I can share it with a broader audience.

## **What do you think we can do to make sure that children appreciate the arts today?**

In a way, parents have to come up with a curriculum at home because the reality is that it's not going to come all from school anymore. We have to re-adjust. I grew up in a house that was perpetually filled with music. It's really that simple; kids are like little sponges. You want them to pick up music, keep playing music around your house. Take them to a concert if you can, watch a performance on TV together. It's a great way to communicate with your kids, too.

---

## **The 49th Odyssey Ball**

7 pm – 1 am

### **Individual Tickets**

\$1,000 | Patron (with premier dinner seating)

\$750 | Patron

\$150 | Young Fellows (ages 21-45)

\$75 | After Party