



# Snarky Puppy

Michael League / *Bass and Band Leader*

Jason "JT" Thomas / *Drums*

Nate Werth / *Percussion*

Shaun Martin / *Keyboards*

Justin Stanton / *Keyboards and Trumpet*

Jay Jennings / *Trumpet*

Chris Bullock / *Tenor Saxophone and Flute*

Chris McQueen / *Guitar*

Zach Brock / *Violin*

*with special guest*

Alina Engibaryan / *Vocals and Piano*

Sunday Evening, September 8, 2019 at 7:00

Hill Auditorium

Ann Arbor

Opening Performance of the 141st Annual Season  
26th Annual Jazz Series

This evening's performance is supported by Michigan Engineering, Elaine and Peter Schweitzer, and Imagine Fitness & Yoga.

This evening's performance is funded in part by JazzNet Endowment Fund.

Media partnership provided by WEMU 89.1 FM, WDET 101.9 FM, and Ann Arbor's 107one.

Special thanks to Ellen Rowe and the U-M Department of Jazz & Contemporary Improvisation for their participation in events surrounding this evening's performance.

Snarky Puppy appears by arrangement with Royal Artist Group.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

## **PROGRAM**

*This evening's program will be announced by the artists from the stage. There will be one intermission following Alina Engibaryan's opening set.*



## ARTISTS

The last four years have brought dramatic changes for **Snarky Puppy**. After a decade of relentless touring and recording in all but complete obscurity, the Texas-bred/New York-based quasi-collective suddenly found itself held up by the press and public as one of the major figures in the jazz world. But as the category names for all three of the band's Grammy Awards would indicate ("Best R&B Performance" in 2014, "Best Contemporary Instrumental Album" in 2016 and 2017), Snarky Puppy isn't exactly a jazz band. It's not a fusion band, and it's definitely not a jam band. It's probably best to take Nate Chinen of the *New York Times*' advice, as stated in an online discussion about the group, to "take them for what they are, rather than judge them for what they're not."

Snarky Puppy is a collective of sorts with as many as 25 members in regular rotation. They each maintain busy schedules as sidemen (with such artists as Erykah Badu, Snoop Dogg, Kendrick Lamar, and D'Angelo), producers (for Kirk Franklin, David Crosby, and Salif Keita), and solo artists (many of whom are on the band's indie label, GroundUP Music). At its core, the band represents the convergence of both black and white American music culture with various accents from around the world. Japan, Argentina, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Puerto Rico all have representation in the group's membership. But more than the cultural diversity of the individual players, the defining characteristic of Snarky Puppy's music is the joy of performing together in the perpetual push to grow creatively.

The band was formed by bassist and primary composer Michael League in 2003, starting inconspicuously enough as a group of college friends at the

University of North Texas' jazz studies program. Three years later, a serendipitous intersection with the gospel and R&B community in Dallas transformed the music into something funkier, more direct, and more visceral. It was at this time that the group absorbed musicians like Robert "Sput" Searight (drums), Shaun Martin (keyboards), and Bobby Sparks (keyboards), and were heavily influenced by legendary keyboardist Bernard Wright (Miles Davis, Chaka Khan, Marcus Miller).

On *We Are*, the follow-up to **Alina Engibaryan**'s 2016 critically acclaimed debut *Driving Down the Road*, the Russian-born singer-songwriter chose to concentrate on making original music — and creating something far more personal. It marks a huge step forward for Ms. Engibaryan, the granddaughter of jazz drumming great Nikolay Goncharov and a budding singer since the age of two.

Helping Ms. Engibaryan along the way is Michael League, the label head of GroundUP Music and co-founder of the Grammy-winning collective Snarky Puppy, who arranged and produced *We Are*. Mr. League discovered the singer while touring the Netherlands, when Ms. Engibaryan was studying jazz vocals at the Prince Claus Conservatory.

Inspired by the likes of musical heroes Stevie Wonder, Kurt Elling, and Gregory Porter, as well as mentors such as J.D. Walter and the late Al Jarreau (who oversaw the 2015 Shure Montreux Jazz Voice Competition that Ms. Engibaryan won), her latest offerings are a beautifully diverse mix of traditional and contemporary jazz.

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## UMS ARCHIVES

Tonight's performance marks **Snarky Puppy**'s second appearance under UMS auspices, following the band's UMS debut in March 2017 in Hill Auditorium. UMS welcomes **Alina Engibaryan** as she makes her UMS debut this evening.

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OF TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE



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### ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 10/5 Post-Performance Artist Q&A: Grupo Corpo  
(Power Center Auditorium)  
*Must have a ticket to that evening's performance to attend.*
- 10/6 You Can Dance: Grupo Corpo  
(Ann Arbor Y, 400 W. Washington Street, 1:30 pm)  
*Registration opens 45 minutes prior to the start of the event.*
- 10/16 & 10/18 Post-Performance Artist Q&A: Isango Ensemble  
(Power Center Auditorium)  
*Must have a ticket to that evening's performance to attend.*

*Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.*