

“...a jaw-dropping vocal symposium. To call them an a cappella group would be a gross understatement, for they performed songs with trumpets, electric guitars, bass cello, harmonica, a full drum kit, and more — using only their voices.”  
— *The Boston Globe*

# Naturally 7

Friday, February 7, 2014  
Englert Theatre  
Hancher  
University of Iowa



**Roger Thomas** • musical director, arranger, 1<sup>st</sup> baritone, rap  
**Warren Thomas** • percussion, guitar, clarinet, 3<sup>rd</sup> tenor  
**Rod Eldridge** • 1<sup>st</sup> tenor, scratching, trumpet  
**Napoleon (Polo) Cummings** • 4<sup>th</sup> tenor, guitar  
**Dwight Stewart** • 2<sup>nd</sup> baritone, vocals, trumpet  
**Garfield Buckley** • 2<sup>nd</sup> tenor, harmonica  
**“Hops” Hutton** • bass



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## Naturally 7 Fast Facts:

- World tours as special guests of Michael Bublé
- Three duets with Michael Bublé
- Special guest for Coldplay
- Duet with Ludacris on Quincy Jones' most recent studio album
- BET Honors for Herbie Hancock
- Night Of The Proms with Mick Hucknall and The Jacksons
- Release of *All Natural Live* – DVD and CD in 2013
- Release of new studio album in spring of 2014

## Biography

With rich harmonies, an unbelievable ability to replicate instruments, and a stage presence that can be felt in every seat of the house, Naturally 7, the first vocal play group ever, is amazing, charming fans wherever the group performs.

The origins of the Naturally 7 date back to New York City in 1999 when Roger Thomas started the group with his brother, Warren, and five other talented singers they had come to know over the years from singing around the city.

Having been in and out of several traditional male groups over the years, Roger developed an affinity for a cappella sounds and a unique ability to create distinct harmony arrangements. When invited to sing at a major a cappella competition in New York, the group won the competition, moved onto the nationals, and took away two more wins.

Riding the wave of this newfound success and still unable to decide if Naturally 7 was going to be an a cappella group or a traditional band, Roger had a novel idea: the group could be both.

He remembered that as a child, his brother Warren had always wanted a drum set but their mother always told him no because it was just too noisy. So Warren learned to make true drum sounds, with different ways of making the kick, toms, snare, cymbals, and other sounds, to compensate for not having real drums to play. Roger approached Warren with the idea from their childhood, and asked if he could become the band's drummer, so to speak, to accompany Naturally 7 on up-tempo songs.

The idea evolved, and the other band members found unique aspects of their own voices to determine which member would be which instrument. After all, Roger concluded, if the human voice truly was an instrument, it should not matter which instrument it needed to be. And for Naturally 7, it really didn't matter – "Vocal Play" was born.

What is the difference between Vocal Play and a cappella? A cappella is defined as singing without instruments. Vocal Play is singing as instruments, and *becoming* an instrument with the voice.

What makes Naturally 7 special is that every instrument sound that the group



makes is created from the human voice. There are no actual drums, guitars, horns, flutes, or any other instrument. Audiences hear the band members playing each of their vocal instruments.

Today, the members of Naturally 7 are Roger Thomas (musical director, arranger, 1st baritone, rap), Warren Thomas (percussion, guitar, clarinet, 3rd tenor) Rod Eldridge (1st tenor, scratching, trumpet), Napoleon (Polo) Cummings (4th tenor, guitar), Dwight Stewart (2nd baritone, vocals, trumpet), Garfield Buckley (2nd tenor, harmonica) and “Hops” Hutton (bass).

The group recorded a number of albums over the years, including *Non Fiction* (2000), the aptly titled *What Is It* (2003), *Christmas...It's A Love Story* (2004), and *Ready II Fly* (2006). *Ready II Fly* included the YouTube-hit “Feel It (In the Air Tonight).” Naturally 7’s famous Paris subway performance of the song, has garnered over four and a half million hits on YouTube alone, and the number of people discovering the group adds to that figure daily. The song turned into a top three chart-success in France, Belgium, and South Africa and made the single charts in other European countries, including Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Portugal.

A turning point for the group came in the fall of 2007. From quiet success all over Europe, the group has been propelled onto the world stage, performing before millions of people.

As the special guest of internationally acclaimed singer Michael Bublé, Naturally 7 has been met with standing ovations nightly in Europe, the U.K., Canada, Australia and the United States.

The next year, 2008, was nothing short of remarkable. In May, Naturally 7 made its national U.S. television debut on *Ellen* and joined Bublé for a guest appearance on *The Today Show*. The group opened for Jay Leno in Las Vegas and performed on his *Tonight Show*, were guests on Tavis Smiley’s program, performed at NARM, helped celebrate Quincy Jones’ 75th birthday in Montreux, and greeted a hometown crowd at Madison Square Garden. Following that show, Naturally 7 travelled to London to play the renowned Royal Variety Performance show, capping the evening off by meeting His Royal Highness Prince Charles.

In January 2009, the group released a special album, *Wall Of Sound*, exclusively for the UK and Ireland, to commemorate the group’s participation at the *Royal Variety Performance*. The album contained material from previous albums, as well as five brand new tracks. It entered the British album charts in the first week after release at number twenty-nine.

It was 2009 when Naturally 7 truly hit the ground running. In January, the group played to a packed house at London’s Pigalle, which included a number of famous faces, among them Coldplay’s Chris Martin and legendary musician and producer Brian Eno. The next day, by invitation, the group joined Coldplay and Eno in the studio.

From the UK, Naturally 7 travelled to California, performing at the prestigious TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Conference. The group received a standing ovation and praise from Daniel Sieberg of CBS News:

“Perhaps the most memorable presentation involved Naturally 7, a group of seven musicians who practice something they call ‘Vocal Play.’ It’s hard to describe their act other than saying each of them used their voices in unison to recreate a different musical instrument from drums to brass instruments to guitars. They made beatboxing look like child’s play. Their ‘Wall of Sound’ song earned them a standing ovation.”

Naturally 7 appeared on *The Late Late Show* with Craig Ferguson, performing “Stardust” with Michael Bublé. In November 2009, the group travelled to Bermuda, taking part in Quincy Jones’ Bermuda Music Festival performing before an enthusiastic crowd.

February of 2010 saw Naturally 7 spend three weeks in Vancouver as performance guests during the Olympic Winter Games and in March the group returned as special guests on Bublé’s *Crazy Love* tour around the world.

Naturally 7’s 2010 CD/DVD *VocalPlay* contains self-penned originals such as “SOS (Anybody Out There),” power ballad “If You Love Me,” the Motown-influenced “Ready or Not,” the Latin “768,” and a duet with Michael Bublé on the Dinah Washington classic “Relax Max.” The bonus DVD includes live material from the group’s Madison Square Garden performance, extensive interviews with each group member, as well as their video clips.

In the fall of 2010, Naturally 7 and Ludacris were featured on the title track of Quincy Jones’ new album, *Soul Bossa Nostra*, which led to a performance on *The View* in November.

The group continued to tour the world with Michael Bublé, receiving standing ovations nightly and rave reviews, including praise from *The Boston Globe*:

“Openers Naturally 7, a seven-piece vocal group from New York who at one point joined Bublé during his set, delivered a jaw-dropping vocal symposium. To call them an a cappella group would be a gross understatement, for they performed songs with trumpets, electric guitars, bass cello, harmonica, a full drum kit, and more – using only their voices. It was like a striking optical illusion, only aural.”





*The Grand Rapids Press* also had high praise for the group:

“Rarely does an opener melt the crowd like Naturally 7 did. By the time their half hour set ended, all too soon, many jumped to their feet to give the stellar musicians a standing ovation.”

In February 2011, Naturally 7 performed at the BET Honors, receiving a standing ovation for “Rockit,” the group’s Herbie Hancock tribute song. Another standout moment came in August when the group was invited to take part in the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Week Celebrations.

“Silver Bells” was Naturally 7’s next collaboration with Michael Bublé, appearing on his multi-million selling and chart topping Christmas album. The group also made a guest appearance on his first NBC special and joined him for a performance on *The Today Show*.

In the spring of 2012, Naturally 7 recorded a DVD in Hamburg. *All Natural Live* will be released this spring. In June 2012, the group made a return appearance at the Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl, receiving a standing ovation from the crowd of eighteen thousand. Naturally 7 continued touring Europe, South America, South Africa, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Two additional highlights created a perfect ending for 2012. The group was the special guest on Coldplay’s *Mylo Xyloto* tour at Brooklyn’s Barclays Center, and performed thirty-two shows at Europe’s most successful arena-event, “Night Of The Proms,” along with Mick Hucknall and The Jacksons.

In June of 2013, Naturally 7 returned as special guests for Michael Bublé’s record-breaking ten performances at London’s O2 Arena.

When not on the road, Naturally 7 has been in the studio recording material for a new release in the spring of 2014.

The group’s phenomenal talent, coupled with a live show that many consider to be one of the best in the world, has Naturally 7 poised for continued success!



# Hancher at the Holidays







The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis and special guest Cécile McLorin Salvant spread holiday cheer in two performances on Dec. 7 at West High School.

Between shows, Marsalis spoke with students from the Iowa City Community School District about his career and the importance of pursuing their dreams.



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# BRILLIANCE IN MOTION

Hancher presents three spectacular dance companies in March and April

## **Ragamala Dance, *Sacred Earth***

Thursday-Friday, March 6-7, 7:30 pm  
Space Place Theater, UI Campus

Acclaimed as one of the Indian Diaspora's leading dance ensembles, Ragamala Dance seamlessly carries the South Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by using it as a dynamic, poetic language with which to convey contemporary ideas. Artistic directors Rane and Aparna Ramaswamy (mother and daughter) are protégés of the legendary dancer and choreographer Alarmel Valli, known as one of India's greatest living masters. Founded in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Ragamala has been challenging assumptions about classical Indian dance for over twenty years.



## **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

Wednesday, March 19, 8 pm  
Paramount Theatre (Cedar Rapids)  
A collaboration with Paramount Presents  
*Transportation available*

Founded by a modern dance legend, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a treasure of American dance. Formed in 1958 in New York City, the company was proclaimed a cultural ambassador to the world by the U.S. Congress in 2008. The company has performed for 23 million people in 48 states and 71 countries on six continents. Today, the company continues Ailey's mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new work. In all, more than 200 works by over 80 choreographers are part of the Ailey company's repertoire. The program will include *Revelations*, Ailey's masterwork.



## **Gallim Dance**

Thursday-Friday, April 24-25, 7:30 pm  
Space Place Theater, UI Campus

Founded in 2007, Gallim Dance is a Brooklyn-based contemporary dance company dedicated to creating and performing original work by Andrea Miller, former company member of Batsheva Dance in Israel. *Dance Magazine* named Miller one of its 25 to Watch (2009) and featured her on the cover of the April 2011 magazine, calling her a "wild child" of movement invention. The goals of her company are to nurture the careers of young artists and to stimulate the imagination of a diverse, international audience.



### **Tickets for Ragamala Dance and Gallim Dance:**

319-335-1160 or 800-HANCHER | [www.hancher.uiowa.edu](http://www.hancher.uiowa.edu)

### **Tickets for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater:**

319-366-8203 | [www.paramounttheatreocr.com](http://www.paramounttheatreocr.com)

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