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Paul Simon performs at Bass Concert Hall on April 8, 2025.

[Charlotte Keene](#)

Paul Simon’s first Austin performance since his retirement in 2018 proved not only a celebration of his life’s work, but also a confrontation.

The renowned singer-songwriter played at Bass Concert Hall on Tuesday night as the first of three Austin performances in his 16-state “A Quiet Celebration” tour. The 83-year-old, known across generations for albums like “Graceland” and his role in the iconic folk duo Simon & Garfunkel, performed two dichotomous sets within two

hours.

Alongside an 11-person band, the Wimberley, Texas, resident first performed a seamless run-through of his 2023 album, “Seven Psalms.” In a CBS Sunday Morning interview, Simon said the LP ended his hiatus because its contents were born from guitar melody fragments that came to him in dreams.

Almost 3,000 attendees listened silently as the album unspooled into a conversation between a man and his maker, between memory and mortality. Simon reflected on divine creation in “The Lord,” sang duets with singer Edie Brickell, his wife, in songs like “Wait,” and approached politics humorously with his signature lyricism in “My Professional Opinion.”

“I heard two cows in conversation,” Simon sang. “One called the other one a name / In my professional opinion / All cows in the country must bear the blame.”

While his first set began as a quiet celebration, Simon returned from intermission ready to unwrap a far louder legacy. The 16-Grammy-Award-winner re-emerged sporting an outfit change from a formal suit to jeans, a purple jacket and a pink baseball cap. He opened with his 1986 album title track, “Graceland,” warranting roars of recognition from the audience. Simon continued playing top hits like “Slip Slidin’ Away” and tunes from his

Garfunkel days like “Homeward Bound” and “The Boxer.”

He also revived rarely performed songs like “The Late Great Johnny Ace,” a ballad about young teenage Simon hearing about blues singer Johnny Ace’s accidental death over the radio. Performed drenched in red stage light, the lyrics connect Ace’s passing to two other Johns’ gun-related deaths that shook the world, Lennon and Kennedy. Their three portraits appeared on screen as the orchestra slowly swelled to a peak — the late great Johnny Aces of their times.

Nearing the show’s end, Simon delivered “Still Crazy After All These Years,” a bluesy tune that featured a wailing saxophone solo played by Grammy-winner Andy Snitzer. The song’s performance carries a heavier weight than its studio version, now sung with 50 more years of life in his voice since the original’s release.

Simon closed by reclaiming the quiet while all but a center stage spotlight dimmed around him. Black acoustic guitar in lap, the New Jersey native strummed the opening riff of Simon and Garfunkel’s seminal “The Sound of Silence.” The lyrics cut through the hall like a confession, ending the night on the same song he last left with Austin almost seven years ago.