

Lincoln Center's

January 30–March 4, 2019

American Songbook

Lead Support provided by PGIM, the global investment management business of Prudential Financial, Inc.

The Program

Saturday, March 2, 2019 at 8:30 pm

Martha Plimpton: All the Presidents Mann

Dan Lipton, *Music Direction, Keyboards, and Vocals*

Matt Beck, *Guitars and Vocals*

Alexandra Eckhardt, *Bass and Vocals*

Konrad Meissner, *Drums*

Additional material by Eric Gilliland

*This evening's program is approximately 75 minutes long
and will be performed without intermission.*

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

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Endowment support provided by Bank of America

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Steinway Piano

The Appel Room

Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall

American Songbook

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UPCOMING AMERICAN SONGBOOK EVENT IN THE APPEL ROOM:

Monday, March 4 at 8:30 pm

Joyce DiDonato: Songplay

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit AmericanSongbook.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 or visit AmericanSongbook.org for complete program information.

Join the conversation: @LincolnCenter

We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

A Darkly Funny Take on Humans, Laced with Empathy

By Jim Farber

In the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election, songwriter Aimee Mann penned a piece from the imagined point of view of then-candidate Donald Trump. Titled “Can’t You Tell,” the song’s lyrics echoed a common assumption at the time—that the last thing Trump wanted to do was actually win. “Isn’t anybody going to stop me?” Mann sang, as the candidate. “I don’t want this job...My God/can’t you tell/I’m unwell.”

It was a funny, acerbic, and insightful take on the character, echoing the qualities of so many of Mann’s songs. And even though that particular joke turned out to be far more on us than him, the song helped plant the seed for a fascinating show in the mind of actor/singer Martha Plimpton. “Last year, I had already been thinking, ‘gee, how can I get somebody to pay me to sing Aimee Mann songs in public?’” Plimpton recalled with a laugh.

At the time, President’s Day was approaching, so Plimpton decided to use that holiday, as well as the Trump song, as inspirations for her show’s quirky conceit—to perform songs from Aimee Mann’s rich catalogue from the point of view of various American presidents. Ergo its wry title: *All the Presidents Mann*.

“The idea just started to follow its own path,” Plimpton said. “Every time I’d play a song, I’d think, ‘oh, Nixon.’ Or ‘that’s Jefferson!’”

It didn’t hurt that Mann’s songs have always offered deep dives into the pathologies that drive human behavior—especially the sort evident in characters who have the outsized egos, and unmitigated gall, to do something like run for president. An attention to human psychology has long been a through-line in Mann’s work, dating from her roles as lead singer and writer of the ’80s band ‘Til Tuesday, through her nine solo albums, as well as her 1999, gold-selling soundtrack for Paul Thomas Anderson’s film *Magnolia*.

Mann’s songs operate like interventions. They’re last-ditch confrontations with characters who have dug themselves so deeply into destructive behavioral patterns, they may never get out. Like most of us, her chosen targets either don’t recognize the patterns of their lives or feel too beholden to them to ever consider changing. “Aimee has an inherent curiosity about the ways in which we’re compelled by forces out of our control—by our neuroses, or our compulsions—to mess up our lives,” Plimpton said.

On her latest album, *Mental Illness*, which won the 2018 Grammy for Best Folk Album, Mann offers an array of fascinating case studies, from the pathological fantasist of “Lies of Summer” to the alcoholic in “Philly Sinks” who has the uncanny ability to transfer his addiction to romantic relationships, as well as to modes of thinking. Romantic relationships come in for hard scrutiny in Mann’s songs. “She’s great at examining how people attach themselves to concepts of love in ways that are twisted or unhealthy,” Plimpton observed. “The songs aren’t just saying ‘you hurt me or you’re so selfish.’ They’re saying, ‘when you’re hurting me, you’re hurting yourself.’”

Plimpton refers to these songs as “psychological indictments.” Underlying them, she believes is “a real sense of justice and righteousness.” That’s especially evident in one piece Plimpton chose to perform in the show, “Amateur.” “The song shows the ways in which a person thought they could get away with things just by gas-lighting or by shutting another person down,” she said.

For all the barbs and frustrations expressed in Mann’s songs, they have a deep sense of empathy. And as heavy as they can get, Plimpton rejects the notion that they’re depressing. “So-called depressing music actually brings you out of depression,” she said. “The songs reflect it back at you so you can finally see yourself. When I listen to her music, it makes me feel like I’m accompanied by some form of truth.”

It helps that Mann’s music ripples with dark humor, delivered with a deadpan. It’s that nuance, as well as Mann’s fine sense of character, that makes her songs ripe for a theatrical singer like Plimpton. Though she’s far better known as an actress, Plimpton has been singing her whole life. She appeared in her first musical at age nine, in the Elizabeth Swados piece *The Haggadah* at The Public Theater. She first took part in the American Songbook series with her 2010 show *Martha Plimpton Sings?* In it, she used cover songs to tell the story of her years growing up on the Upper West Side of the ‘70s and ‘80s. “It was in a city that no longer exists, in a neighborhood that now barely exists,” she said. “It was all the stories of danger and interest and joy.”

In the music that she chose for that piece, as well as this new one, Plimpton looks for the story in the song. This time, by sticking with just one songwriter, whose work she repurposed in a political context, her show offers something both timely and unique. “What I hope is that the show will help people remain engaged, instead of checking out,” she said. “I also hope that they find it funny and, to some degree, that it breaks their heart.”

Jim Farber, the former chief music critic of the New York Daily News, currently contributes to the New York Times, Guardian, Entertainment Weekly, and many other outlets. He is a three-time winner of the ASCAP-Deems Taylor/Virgil Thompson Award for music writing.

Martha Plimpton



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Martha Plimpton received an Emmy Award for her work on *The Good Wife* and was nominated for an Emmy and twice for a Critics Choice Television Award for her performance on *Raising Hope*. She most recently starred in *The Real O'Neals*. Ms. Plimpton is the only actor in history to be nominated for a Tony Award in three consecutive seasons for her performances in Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*, Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, and Rodgers

and Hart's *Pal Joey*. She is the recipient of an Obie Award for her performance Off-Broadway in *Hobson's Choice* and last appeared on Broadway opposite Glenn Close and John Lithgow in Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance*. Her numerous film credits include *The Goonies*, *The Mosquito Coast*, *Running on Empty*, *Beautiful Girls*, *Parenthood*, *200 Cigarettes*, *Pecker*, *Eye of God*, *Small Town Murder Songs*, *Hello Again*, and the upcoming *Natalie*. Ms. Plimpton made her London stage debut in Jon Robin Baitz's *Other Desert Cities* at the Old Vic. She recently starred in Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Sweat* at the Donmar Warehouse and will return to London's West End to reprise her role at the Gielgud Theatre in June 2019. Ms. Plimpton's show *Martha Plimpton Sings?* marked her debut with American Songbook in 2010.

Dan Lipton

Dan Lipton (music direction, keyboards, vocals) conducted *The Last Ship* by Sting on Broadway and spent much of the past year playing keyboards and conducting at *The Band's Visit*. He has arranged music and led bands for Kelli O'Hara, Brian d'Arcy James, Judy Kuhn, John Lithgow, and Audra McDonald, performing at the White House, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and on *Live with Kelly and Ryan*, *Great Performances*, *Today*, and *Late Show with David Letterman*. His music directing credits include *The Other Josh Cohen* (Off-Broadway), the Drama Desk Awards, *The Coast of Utopia* (Broadway), *Don't Quit Your Night Job* (Off-Broadway), *The Bridge Project* with Sam Mendes (BAM, Old Vic), and *Herringbone* with BD Wong and Roger Rees (La Jolla Playhouse). With Rick Elice and David Rossmer, he is writing Hasbro's Broadway-bound musical *Monopoly*. Mr. Lipton scored the film *All These Small Moments*, starring Molly Ringwald and Jemima Kirke, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and was released in January by Orion Classics.

Matt Beck

Matt Beck (guitars, vocals) was born into a musical family and started studying classical piano by age six. Two years later he was accepted into The Juilliard School and by 14, he had shifted his focus to guitar, eventually studying at Manhattan School of Music and earning a degree in jazz/commercial guitar performance. After graduating, he joined singer-songwriter Lisa Loeb's band Nine Stories and spent the next few years touring as her guitarist/keyboardist. Not long after, Mr. Beck joined Matchbox Twenty playing keyboards, guitar, pedal steel, and mandolin for the group's *More Than You Think You Are* tour and has played all subsequent tours. In 2007 he was handpicked to join Rod Stewart's band for his *Still the Same* tour. Other artists with whom Mr. Beck has had the pleasure of recording/touring are Miley Cyrus, Gwen Stefani, The B-52's, and Rosanne Cash, as well as playing guitar for the Broadway shows of Bono and The Edge (*Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*), Sting (*The Last Ship*), and Carole King (*Beautiful*).

Alexandra Eckhardt

Alexandra Eckhardt (bass, vocals) began playing bass at age eight with her father as her teacher. She attended University of Connecticut, where she was mentored by Kenny Davis. Upon graduating, Ms. Eckhardt won the bass chair for the national tour of *In the Heights*, which led to her next tour with *The Book of Mormon*. She currently holds her own chair in the Tony Award-winning show *The Band's Visit* in addition to playing on the Grammy-nominated cast recording. She was featured playing with Questlove on the PBS documentary *Hamilton's America*, about the making of the hit musical, and has also played with a variety of artists including Jordin Sparks and Here We Go Magic. More recently, she performed with Sara Bareilles on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, premiering her new song "Armor." Ms. Eckhardt frequently doubles on cello and vocals.

Konrad Meissner

Konrad Meissner (drums) has performed with artists including Brandi Carlile, Katy Perry, Matt Nathanson, Tracy Bonham, The Mammals, Graham Parker, Lia Ices, Lost Leaders, and The Silos. This past summer, he played in the house band for *Music + Revolution: Greenwich Village in the 1960s*, which featured Richard Barone, David Amram, John Sebastian, Melanie, and Nellie McKay, among others. For the past 20 years, Mr. Meissner has toured extensively and played in disparate venues ranging from a horse barn in the Catskills to Madison Square Garden. As a bass player, he co-leads a country band called The Three Gentlemen, which plays regularly near his home in Brooklyn. Mr. Meissner's love of music began as a snare drummer in his Texas high school football marching band, and he brings that same level of enthusiasm to every new experience since those Friday night games.

Eric Gilliland

Eric Gilliland (additional material) is thrilled to be back at Lincoln Center, having directed and co-written Martha's first American Songbook performance of *Martha Plimpton Sings?* His side gig for years has been writing and producing television sitcoms, most notably *The Wonder Years*, *Roseanne*, *That 70's Show*, and *My Boys*. He worked on *Roseanne* for four seasons, eventually becoming its showrunner/executive producer, garnering a Peabody Award and a Golden Globe. He also produced the multiple-award-winning documentary *God Grew Tired of Us: The Story of Lost Boys of Sudan*. Mr. Gilliland is a professional whistler and has no children and no pets.

American Songbook

In 1998, Lincoln Center launched American Songbook, dedicated to the celebration of popular American song. Designed to highlight and affirm the creative mastery of America's songwriters from their emergence at the turn of the 19th century up through the present, American Songbook spans all styles and genres, from the form's early roots in Tin Pan Alley and Broadway to the eclecticism of today's singer-songwriters. American Songbook also showcases the outstanding interpreters of popular song, including established and emerging concert, cabaret, theater, and songwriter performers.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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For American Songbook

Matt Berman, *Lighting Design*

Scott Stauffer, *Sound Design*

Matt Berman

Matt Berman is the resident lighting designer for Lincoln Center's American Songbook. He recently designed the lighting for South Florida Symphony Orchestra's production of *Porgy & Bess*. His most recent Broadway credit was Kristin Chenoweth's *My Love Letter to Broadway* at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, and, in London, for "Meow Meow's Pandemonium" with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at Royal Festival Hall. Mr. Berman continues his design work for Chenoweth, Liza Minnelli, Alan Cumming, Meow Meow, Brian Stokes Mitchell, and Elaine Paige on the road.

Through his work with several U.S.-based charities, Mr. Berman has designed for a starry roster that includes Bernadette Peters, Barbra Streisand, Reba McEntire, Melissa Errico, Deborah Voigt, Michael Urie, Stevie Wonder, India.Arie, Garth Brooks, Billy Joel, and Sting. His international touring schedule has allowed him to design for iconic venues such as Royal Albert Hall, Paris Opera, Royal Theatre Carré in Amsterdam, the Sporting Club in Monte Carlo, the Acropolis, the famed amphitheater in Taormina, Sicily, as well as Luna Park in Buenos Aires, and the Sydney Opera House. Closer to home, Mr. Berman has done work in such iconic venues as the Hollywood Bowl, Alice Tully Hall, and Carnegie Hall. Other Broadway credits include the Tony Award-winning *Liza's at the Palace*, *Bea Arthur on Broadway* at the Booth Theatre,

Nancy LaMott's *Just in Time for Christmas*, and *Kathy Griffin Wants a Tony* at the Belasco Theater.

Scott Stauffer

Scott Stauffer has been the sound designer for Lincoln Center's American Songbook since 1999. His Broadway design credits include *A Free Man of Color*, *The Rivals*, *Contact* (also in London and Tokyo), *Marie Christine*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Jekyll & Hyde*. Off-Broadway Mr. Stauffer has worked on *Mother Freaking Hood*, *Subverted*, *Promises*, *Hereafter*, *A Minister's Wife*, *Bernarda Alba*, *Third*, *Belle Epoque*, *Big Bill*, *Elegies*, *Hello Again*, *The Spitfire Grill*, *Pageant*, and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. His regional credits include productions at the Denizen Theater, Manhattan School of Music, Capitol Repertory Theatre, University of Michigan, Hanger Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and Alley Theatre. His concert credits include many Lincoln Center galas, as well as the Actors Fund concerts of *Frank Loesser*, *Broadway 101*, *Hair*, and *On the Twentieth Century*. At Carnegie Hall he has worked with Chita Rivera and Brian Stokes Mitchell. As a sound engineer, Mr. Stauffer has worked on *The Lion King*, *Juan Darién*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, *Carousel*, *Once on This Island*, and the original *Little Shop of Horrors*.