



Lincoln Center Announces 2020 Season of American Songbook, January 22 – February 29

Highlights lauded singer-songwriters, groundbreaking storytellers, artists pushing the boundaries of the human voice, and creative talents of the screen and stage, including:

- Singer-songwriter and composer **Rufus Wainwright** in new show *Songs That Built Me*; **Natalie Merchant** crafts intimate, acoustic career retrospective
- Tony Award winning veteran **André De Shields** and leading man **Brandon Victor Dixon** in brand new stage shows; Tony Award winner and trailblazer **Ali Stroker**; and breakout composer-lyricist **Joe Iconis** premieres new musical numbers
- Mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe** performs as drag alter ego, tenor **Blythely Oratonio**; Experimental choral group **Roomful of Teeth**
- Classically trained lyricist, composer, pioneering television writer, and trans activist, **Our Lady J** debuts new music
- Legendary **Cowboy Junkies** play their unique brand of folk-rock off new album *All That Reckoning*
- Grammy-winning, multitalented Puerto Rican–born songwriter **iLe**
- Rare East Coast appearance by Hawaiian singer-songwriter **Kalani Pe'a**
- Dynamic, bluesy-folk artist **Martin Sexton**

NEW YORK, NY (October 30, 2019) — Lincoln Center's acclaimed American Songbook series returns for its 21st year, celebrating the expansive scope and intricacy of the popular music canon from January 22 – February 29, 2020. This year's concert series includes lauded singer-songwriters, groundbreaking composers, storytellers speaking truth to power, experimental vocalists, and multitalented performers whose artistic breadth reflects the far-reaching perspectives and experiences of the essential American Songbook.

"Our American Songbook series brings together a superb group of award-winning musicians, composers, and interpreters of song whose artistry speaks to the broad, ever-expanding facets of American song," said Jane Moss, Ehrenkranz Artistic Director of Lincoln Center. "Each concert offers an intimate experience with some of the most celebrated and up-and-coming performers in genres from Broadway to Bolero to experimental choral work. We invite audiences to join us for artists they may have loved for decades, and to discover new voices that speak to a range of contemporary experience."

Opening the season, vocalist, songwriter, and composer **Rufus Wainwright** performs a new show, **Songs That Built Me** – a concert experience created especially for his American Songbook debut. Delving into his celebrated catalogue, Wainwright performs the songs that have shaped his identity as an artist and previews selections from his forthcoming Spring 2020 album. **Natalie Merchant**, former lead singer of the folk-rock outfit 10,000 Maniacs, digs through her immense 7-album discography of solo work for a show that highlights the poetic songwriting, socially conscious songs, and outspoken political activism that has influenced a generation of up-and-coming performers. This intimate performance is entirely acoustic and accompanied by her longtime guitarist Erik Della Penna.

Broadway stars ascend onto the Appel Room stage, starting with 2019 Tony Award winner **André De Shields** (*Hadestown*) with a new original show, **Old Dawg; New Tricks**; On Valentine's day, **Brandon Victor Dixon** (*The Color Purple*, *Hamilton*, Showtime's *Power*), performs his very first solo concert with his brand of essential, powerful stagecraft; Unstoppable performer **Ali Stroker** (*Oklahoma!*, *Spring Awakening*) performs with the unbridled spirit and powerhouse pop soprano that made her the first actress to be nominated and win a Tony award (2019) while using a wheelchair for mobility; And the prodigiously talented writer and performer **Joe Iconis**, whose musical *Be More Chill* took Broadway by storm, brings his trademark mash-up of show-tune cabaret and rock 'n' roll for a set of classic tunes and brand new numbers.

The limits of the human voice are tested through the experimental, cutting-edge, and Grammy Award-winning a cappella group **Roomful of Teeth**. One of the most critically acclaimed mezzo-sopranos of her time, **Stephanie Blythe** asks what it means to transition to a new role, art form, and voice with her show "**Blythely Ever After**," a display of her outrageous drag alter ego, tenor **Blythely Orationio**. Her bearded persona brings audiences on a unique musical journey through opera classics and rock and pop arias. Hawaiian folk-music has its American Songbook debut with the classically trained tenor **Kalani Pe'a** in a rare East Coast appearance. Pe'a's versatile voice tours a range of traditional chants, Hawaiian classics, R&B tracks, and original compositions.

After a pioneering career of music composition in the classical and pop world (Sia, American Ballet Theatre) and becoming the first out trans woman to be hired in a TV writers' room (*Pose*, *Transparent*), Emmy-nominated **Our Lady J** returns to NYC to debut a new catalogue of electro-pop and gospel infused music that she wrote with her collaborator Justin Tranter, one of the most successful songwriters in pop music today. Performing on the heels of her sophomore album *Almadura*, the rapidly rising singer-songwriter **iLe** makes her Lincoln Center debut. Her music simultaneously an ode to Puerto Rico and call for political action, iLe brings a tapestry of songs to the stage that include timeless boleros, Afro-Caribbean rhythms, and protest anthems.

Martin Sexton's unpredictable voice and soulful melodies, which seamlessly mix folk, rhythm and blues, jazz, and rock, brought him from his beginnings as a street performer in Boston to prestigious stages all over the world with his musical heroes – Art Garfunkel, Jackson Browne, John Hiatt and more. The famed singer-songwriter's honest lyrics and vocal prowess find the perfect home in The Appel Room's intimate setting. The alternative country legends **Cowboy Junkies** earned a ravenous following for the quiet honesty and vulnerability of their second album *The Trinity Sessions*. Thirty years later, the band plays an intimate folk-rock set with their new album, *All That Reckoning*, a deeply personal record that speaks to contemporary society, good and bad.

"We are proud to sponsor the 2020 American Songbook series and help bring this incredible array of talent and musical genres to Lincoln Center's stage," said Orlando Ashford, president, Holland America Line. "Supporting these performances is a perfect fit for us as we are similarly committed to bringing our cruise guests the most diverse collection of live music experiences at sea, including the exclusive Lincoln Center Stage chamber music performances. We hope that American Songbook inspires everyone who attends, as music – like travel – opens one's mind in such a meaningful way."

The 21st American Songbook series is one of many programs offered by Lincoln Center that annually activates the campus's indoor and outdoor spaces across a wide range of the performing arts. Additional presentations include the White Light Festival, Great Performers, Mostly Mozart Festival, Midsummer Night Swing, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, ongoing free performances at the David Rubenstein Atrium, and Live From Lincoln Center broadcasts that reach beyond the iconic campus. Lincoln Center also presents a myriad of education programs and presentations for families throughout the year.

This year's American Songbook concerts are based in two venues at Lincoln Center. The Appel Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center, with its floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Columbus Circle, hosts cabaret-style performances that include table seating, close proximity to the performers, and an incomparable view of the Manhattan skyline. In addition, the series returns to the warm wood-veneered stage of Alice Tully Hall.

Tickets for Members of Lincoln Center go on sale beginning November 6 and to the general public November 15. Tickets may be purchased online at AmericanSongbook.org, via CenterCharge at 212.721.6500, and at the Alice Tully Hall and David Geffen Hall Box Offices. Premium packages, which include red wine, dinner, and the best seats in the house, are available for purchase for select Appel Room performances; find more information at AmericanSongbook.org, and learn about our Members of Lincoln Center program at Support.LincolnCenter.org.

American Songbook 2020

Rufus Wainwright: Songs That Built Me

Wednesday, January 22, 2020 at 7:30 pm

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage

With his emotionally candid melodies and "genuine originality" (*New York Times*), Rufus Wainwright has established himself as one of the great vocalists, composers, and songwriters of his generation. As a pop vocalist and songwriter, he has collaborated with musical giants, including Elton John, David Byrne, and Joni Mitchell. His musical output has been wondrously varied and prolific, including a historic re-creation of Judy Garland's 1961 comeback concert that was performed to sold-out, adoring crowds in New York, Paris, Toronto, Los Angeles and London. His last album was a setting of nine Shakespeare sonnets. For this highly anticipated show in Alice Tully Hall, Wainwright delves into his catalogue, including songs that have shaped him as an artist and may preview tracks from his forthcoming pop album, to be released in Spring of 2020. Through a set list created specially for his American Songbook debut, Rufus will build a singular viewpoint of American song through his unique, unmistakable lens.

André De Shields: Old Dawg; New Tricks

Wednesday, January 29, 2020 at 8:30 pm

The Appel Room

"The top of one mountain is the bottom of the next, so keep climbing," advised André De Shields upon accepting the 2019 Tony Award for his performances as Hermes in Anais Mitchell's *Hadestown*. And keep climbing he does. At the age of 73, De Shields was the triple crown winner of the 2019 award season (also securing an Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk Award along with his Tony). In an illustrious career that has spanned a half century, he has distinguished himself as an actor, director, and educator, getting his start as the title character in *The Wiz* in 1975. With profound wit, elegance, and charm, this silky veteran of the stage proves why his star is *still* on the rise.

Stephanie Blythe Is Blythely Oratonio in: "Blythely Ever After"

Thursday, January 30, 2020 at 8:30 pm

The Appel Room

Blythely Ever After is a musical journey through the life of the tender, testosterone-filled tenor of the century, Blythely Oratonio. Known as the outrageous alter ego of renowned mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, Oratonio takes you on a journey through his art and life in a mouthwatering musical cocktail of opera, rock and pop arias, garnished with a copious amount of facial hair. Blythe has performed on many of the world's great stages, such as Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, Paris National Opera, and opera houses across the U.S. But fans of the opera powerhouse have rarely seen or heard her—him—quite like this.

*John Jarboe, co-writer & director; Arrangements by Daniel Kazemi; Costumes by Machine Dazzle with Rebecca Kanach
Developed in collaboration with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret and Opera Philadelphia*

Cowboy Junkies

Friday, January 31, 2020 at 8:30 pm

The Appel Room

More than 30 years ago, Cowboy Junkies proved that there was an audience waiting for something quiet, beautiful and reflective. *The Trinity Session*, recorded at Toronto's Church of the Holy Trinity, was like a whisper that cut through the noise—and it was compelling. The album stood out in the midst of the flash and bombast that had come to define the late '80s. The now-classic recording combined folk, blues and rock in a way that had never been heard before and went on to sell more than a million copies. With their new album, *All That Reckoning*, the band once again gently shakes the listener to wake up, to take notice. "It's a deeper and a more complete record than we've ever done before," says guitarist and songwriter Michael Timmins. "These songs are about reckoning on a personal level and reckoning on a political level."

Joe Iconis

Saturday, February 1, 2020 at 8:30 pm

The Appel Room

A musical-theater writer with "a knack for story and a taste for strange" (*New York Times*), Joe Iconis enjoyed an industry breakthrough when his song for NBC's *Smash*—"Broadway, Here I Come!"—was hailed by the *New York Times* as a new entry in the Great American Songbook. His musicals *Broadway Bounty Hunter* (with Lance Rubin and Jason SweetTooth Williams at Greenwich House Theater), *Bloodsong of Love* (Ars Nova), *The Black Suits*, *ReWrite*, and *Be More Chill*—the pharmaceutically enhanced teen satire that took Broadway by storm—have distinguished the prodigiously talented Iconis as a household name. A viral sensation, *Be More Chill* earned Iconis a Tony nomination, along with a platform to share his rock- and pop-infused songs with a whole new legion of fans. The self-proclaimed rabble rouser now brings his trademark mash-up of show-tune cabaret and rock 'n' roll jam session to American Songbook for an incendiary set of classic tunes and new numbers.

iLe

Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at 8:30 pm

The Appel Room

Singer-songwriter Ileana Cabra Joglar, better known as iLe, rose to fame as part of the musically omnivorous Puerto Rican hip-hop group Calle 13, winning three Grammy Awards and 24 Latin Grammys—the most earned by a single act to date. In 2016, the artist reemerged as iLe with the release of her solo debut album, *iLevitable*, a bravura survey of traditional Latin forms. The album earned her a Grammy and prompted NPR to deem her "a first-class interpreter of the classic sounds that flow through Latin America." In 2019, she shed her skin once again with the intimate sophomore album *Almadura*, featuring legendary pianist Eddie Palmieri. Simultaneously an ode to Puerto Rico and a call for political action, it reveals an artist upending old assumptions and unafraid to share a wealth of emotion. iLe collaborated with Residente and Bad Bunny on the protest song "Afilando Los Cuchillos" ("Sharpening the Knives") this past July, which garnered 2.5 million views on YouTube within a day of its release. Fresh off this incendiary success, iLe celebrates her American Songbook debut with a varied tapestry of songs that expose the poetry and strength of this multilingual, multitalented star.

Roomful of Teeth

Thursday, February 13, 2020 at 8:30 pm
The Appel Room

A leading incubator for cutting-edge a cappella music, Roomful of Teeth has sought inspiration from both experimental and world traditions, including Tuvan throat singing, yodeling, Korean p'ansori, and Sardinian cantu a tenore. The ensemble's first record won the Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance in 2013. That same year, one of the group's singers, alto Caroline Shaw, won the Pulitzer Prize for music for *Partita for 8 Voices*—a work that put Roomful of Teeth on the map and catapulted Shaw to international prominence. In the years since, the ensemble has performed at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and Disney Concert Hall alongside the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Hailed as “fiercely beautiful” (NPR) and “pure joy” (*Boston Globe*), Roomful of Teeth creates music that is at once primeval and sophisticated, ancient and modern, abstract but dramatic waves of pitch-perfect vocalism.

Brandon Victor Dixon

Friday, February 14, 2020 at 8:30 pm
The Appel Room

For more than a decade, the soulful and sensitive Brandon Victor Dixon has charmed audiences onstage and on screen with his “powerful and charismatic” (*New York Times*) performances in *The Color Purple*, *Shuffle Along*, *Motown The Musical*, *The Scottsboro Boys*, and NBC's Emmy Award-winning *Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert*. Most recently, he co-starred in Fox's *Rent: Live*. In 2016, he took over the role of Aaron Burr in a little-known show called *Hamilton* for nearly a year before joining the cast of the hit TV series *Power*. He has also produced several new pieces, including a tribute to James Brown, and has performed in concerts alongside heavyweight talents Jennifer Hudson, Nathan Lane, Wynton Marsalis, Chita Rivera, Liza Minnelli, and Kelli O'Hara, among others. On Valentine's Day, the Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award-nominee promises to bring down the house in this evening of essential, powerful stagecraft.

Our Lady J

Saturday, February 15, 2020 at 8:30 pm
The Appel Room

After a career of making music in both the pop and classical worlds (Sia, American Ballet Theatre, Mark Morris Dance Group), Our Lady J—an Emmy and Golden Globe nominee and Peabody Award winner—returns to the New York stage. Her American Songbook performance will showcase her progression as a lyricist and composer since becoming a writer and producer in Hollywood (currently on Ryan Murphy's *Pose* on FX). Our Lady J will debut her catalogue of new music, which will feature original compositions with her collaborator, Justin Tranter, one of the most successful songwriters in pop music today. Our Lady J holds the honor of being the first out trans woman to perform at Carnegie Hall, as well as the first out trans writer to be hired in a television writers' room. Tonight, she takes The Appel Room's glittering stage for a liberating celebration that fuses electro-pop with the uplifting, soul-shaking sound she's known—and loved—for. Don't be surprised if there's a little Dolly Parton in there.

An Evening with Natalie Merchant

Wednesday, February 26, 2020 at 8:30 pm
The Appel Room

After rising to fame at the helm of the popular folk-rock band 10,000 Maniacs, Natalie Merchant enjoyed even greater success as a solo artist. She has released seven studio albums, an enduring collection that charts the politically alert, poetic songwriter's evolving thoughts on female power, motherhood, and the future of our earth. Her literate, socially conscious songs established her among the most respected women in pop, and her solo debut—1995's *Tigerlily*—helped pave the way for a number of female performers. From her earliest days with 10,000 Maniacs (formed in college when she was only 18!), Merchant's indelible vocal style—smoky, lush, wistful, and wise—has won lifelong fans. For American Songbook, she will be appearing as an acoustic duo with her longtime guitarist Erik Della Penna. Merchant is at a point in

her career where she wants, in her own words, “unique experiences...not settling for the predictable routing and venues.”

Kalani Pe‘a

Thursday, February 27, 2020 at 8:30 pm
The Appel Room

The words and music of Hawai‘i make their joyous American Songbook debut with a visit from singer-songwriter Kalani Pe‘a, a two-time Grammy Award winner for Best Regional Roots album. The classically trained tenor with a charming and dynamic onstage presence has won praise for his dedication to Hawaiian language fluency, and a musical range that runs from traditional chant to Hawaiian classics, original songs to R&B. Pe‘a’s Grammy wins have led to sold-out concerts in Hawai‘i, Japan, and the West Coast. Now American Songbook is proud to invite him to a rare East Coast appearance.

Ali Stroker

Friday, February 28, 2020 at 8:30 pm
The Appel Room

An unstoppable star, Ali Stroker made history as the first Broadway actress to use a wheelchair when she re-conceived the role of Anna in Deaf West’s acclaimed 2015 revival of *Spring Awakening*. Her Broadway follow-up was even more groundbreaking: Stroker won instant acclaim and a devoted following for her stunning turn as Ado Annie in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s classic *Oklahoma!* The high-spirited, vocally glorious performance earned her the 2019 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical. Whether the New Jersey native is wowing the judges of *The Glee Project* or captivating crowds at the Kennedy Center or Town Hall, Stroker is a force to be reckoned with. With her unbridled spirit and powerhouse pop soprano, she now makes her American Songbook and Appel Room debut in a dazzling evening of song.

Martin Sexton

Saturday, February 29, 2020 at 8:30 pm
The Appel Room

Martin Sexton has come a long way since his days as a street performer in Boston, selling his self-produced cassette recording from an open guitar case. The Syracuse native launched his own label, Kitchen Table Records, and his diverse musical talents have carried him from the sidewalk to landmark venues such as Carnegie Hall. Best known for his untamed and unpredictable voice, Sexton seamlessly mixes folk, rhythm and blues, jazz, and rock in his tracks, intertwined with bluesy guitar and soulful grooves. Sexton has influenced a generation of contemporary artists—from John Mayer to Dave Matthews—but continues to keep his music fresh and relatable. His “blue-eyed soul” sound has also gone out to countless listeners worldwide through inclusion on soundtracks for *Scrubs*, *Parenthood* and HBO’s *Brotherhood*. The Appel Room’s intimate stage provides the perfect setting for this dynamic singer-songwriter whose honest lyrics and vocal prowess will have audiences hooked.

* * *

About American Songbook

Since its launch in 1998, American Songbook has been dedicated to celebrating the extraordinary achievements of the popular American songwriter from the turn of the 20th century to the present day. Spanning all styles and genres from Tin Pan Alley and Broadway to the eclecticism of today’s songwriters working in pop, cabaret, rock, folk, and country, American Songbook traces the history and charts the course of the American song from its past and current forms to its future direction.

About Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community engagement, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of

thousands of free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers a variety of festivals and programs, including American Songbook, Avery Fisher Career Grants and Artist program, David Rubenstein Atrium programming, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Awards, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Lincoln Center Vera List Art Project, LC Kids, Midsummer Night Swing, Mostly Mozart Festival, White Light Festival, the Emmy Award–winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS, and Lincoln Center Education, which is celebrating more than four decades enriching the lives of students, educators, and lifelong learners. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations: The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Film at Lincoln Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Juilliard School, Lincoln Center Theater, The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet, New York Philharmonic, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, School of American Ballet, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

Lincoln Center is committed to providing and improving accessibility for people with disabilities. For information, contact Accessibility at Lincoln Center at access@lincolncenter.org or 212.875.5375.

About Holland America Line

Holland America Line's fleet of 14 ships offers more than 500 cruises to more than 400 ports in 98 countries, territories or dependencies around the world. From shorter getaways to 128-day itineraries, the company's cruises visit all seven continents, with highlights including Antarctica explorations, South America circumnavigations and exotic Australia & New Zealand and Asia voyages; three annual Grand Voyages; and popular sailings to the Caribbean, Alaska, Mexico, Canada & New England, Europe and the Panama Canal. The line welcomed *Nieuw Statendam* in December 2018. A third Pinnacle-class ship, *Ryndam*, will be delivered in 2021.

The company's brand evolution in recent years secured its position as the leader in premium cruising. Fleetwide, the ships feature innovative initiatives and a diverse range of enriching experiences focused on destination immersion and personalized travel. Outstanding entertainment fills each evening at venues including Lincoln Center Stage, B.B. King's Blues Club, Rolling Stone Rock Room and Billboard Onboard. The dining experience can be savored at a variety of restaurants with menus that feature selections from Holland America Line's esteemed Culinary Council, comprising world-famous chefs who design dishes exclusively for guests.

Lead Support provided by Holland America Line.

Additional support for Lincoln Center's American Songbook is provided by Christina and Robert Baker, Rita J. and Stanley H. Kaplan Family Foundation, The DuBose and Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund, The Shubert Foundation, Great Performers Circle, Lincoln Center Patrons and Lincoln Center Members.

Endowment support provided by Bank of America.

Public support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

NewYork-Presbyterian is the Official Hospital of Lincoln Center.

Artist catering provided by Zabar's and Zabars.com

PHONE NUMBERS/CONTACT INFORMATION:

CenterCharge: 212.721.6500

Lincoln Center general website: LincolnCenter.org
American Songbook page: AmericanSongbook.org
Lincoln Center Customer Service: 212.875.5456
Lincoln Center Information Line: 212.875.5766

Additional information, photos, and videos available at Lincoln Center Press Room:

AboutLincolnCenter.org/Press-Room

Log in or register for access

FOLLOW LINCOLN CENTER ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook: facebook.com/LincolnCenterNYC

Twitter: @LincolnCenter #LCSongbook

Instagram: @LincolnCenter #LCSongbook

###

Press Contacts

Desiree Naranjo

212.875.5078

dnaranjo@lincolncenter.org

Jenni Klauder

212.875.5490

jklauder@lincolncenter.org