

Audra McDonald

Friday, November 22, 2002, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall

featuring
Peter Donovan, bass
Dan Lipton, piano
Dave Ratajczak, percussion

This evening's performance will be announced from the stage.

Audra McDonald records exclusively for Nonesuch Records, a division of Time/Warner, Inc.

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Audra McDonald (soprano) has been compared to a young Barbra Streisand (by columnist Frank Rich in *The New York Times*) and a young Judy Garland (David Patrick Stearns in *USA Today*). Whichever comparison you choose, there can be little doubt that she is a once-in-a-generation performer. By the time she was 28, Audra had made Broadway history, winning Tony Awards for *Carousel*, *Master Class*, and *Ragtime*. She earned her fourth Tony nomination in six years for *Marie Christine*, a musical re-telling of the Medea myth, created for her by Michael John LaChiusa. Since then, she has distinguished herself as a concert performer, recording artist, and dramatic actress, adding an Emmy nomination to her expanding list of critical and popular acclaim.

Returning to the material for which she earned her first Tony, Audra starred opposite Hugh Jackman in a sold-out concert performance of *Carousel* conducted by Leonard Slatkin at Carnegie Hall on June 6, 2002. This time around, Tony Award-winning director Walter Bobbie asked Audra to exchange her supporting role for a leading one. Writing in *The New York Times*, critic Ben Brantley commented, ". . . with the incomparable Audra McDonald playing Julie Jordan to Mr. Jackman's Billy Bigelow, 'If I Loved You' . . . never sounded more affecting." Audra's year-end concert appearances will include return engagements at the Hollywood Bowl, the Ravinia Festival, and the Proms Festival in London—she will be only the second American in the festival's 108-year history to perform the closing night concert, which will be broadcast live by the BBC. On New Year's Eve 2002, Audra makes her debut with the Berlin Philharmonic, led by Sir Simon Rattle.

With *Happy Songs*, her third solo album, Audra celebrates the birth of her daughter. She performed many of the album's Harold Arlen, Duke Ellington, and George and Ira Gershwin tunes with a big band in her first-ever solo concert at Carnegie Hall on November 2, 2002. The releases of *Way Back To Paradise* in 1998 and the best-selling *How Glory Goes* in 2000 launched Audra's solo recording career and the beginning of an exclusive contract with Nonesuch Records. Her other recordings include a live concert recording of *Dreamgirls* (featuring Lillias White and Heather Headley) on Nonesuch; the original cast recording of *Marie Christine* on RCA Victor; *Sweeney Todd: Live at the Philharmonic*; Leonard Bernstein's *Wonderful Town* on EMI, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle; and the original soundtrack of Tim Robbins' film *Cradle Will Rock* on BMG.

Following her Emmy-nominated performance in *Wit*, the HBO film of Margaret Edson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, directed by Mike Nichols and starring Emma Thompson, Audra will soon return to network television in the political drama *Mister Sterling*. Produced by Emmy Award-winner

Lawrence O'Donnell, Jr. (*The West Wing*), the show stars Josh Brolin (*Hollow Man*, *The Mod Squad*) as a young independent US Senator. Audra will play Jackie Brock, his chief of staff. The production, from NBC Studios and Universal Television, has been picked up as an NBC mid-season replacement, and will air during the 2002–03 television season.

CBS' Peabody Award-winning *Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters' First 100 Years* introduced Audra to television audiences as a dramatic actress. She went on to co-star with Victor Garber and Kathy Bates in the critically lauded ABC/Disney production of *Annie*. For Showtime, Audra appeared with James Garner in an adaptation of Jim Lehrer's *The Last Debate*. She has also guest-starred on NBC's *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* and *Homicide*. A familiar face on PBS, Audra can be seen in the upcoming *A Richard Rogers Celebration* with Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops. Other PBS productions include the July 4th broadcast *A Capitol Fourth*; *My Favorite Broadway: The Leading Ladies*; Leonard Bernstein's *New York*; and *Some Enchanted Evening—A Salute to Oscar Hammerstein*. She has been profiled by *60 Minutes* and *The Today Show*, and was a frequent guest on *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*.

Audra opened the 2001 seasons of both the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony (under music directors Esa-Pekka Salonen and Michael Tilson Thomas, respectively) with the debut of a new arrangement by Larry Hochman of music by Duke Ellington, commissioned by the two orchestras for Audra. Other highlights of the 2001 season included performances of Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* with the New York Philharmonic; and a debut at *Wolf Trap* with the National Symphony under Leonard Slatkin.

Singing selections from *Porgy and Bess*, Audra made her Carnegie Hall debut on the opening night of the Hall's 1998–99 season, with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony. She has since performed at the London Proms with Sir Simon Rattle; with the Cleveland Orchestra and the National Symphony under Leonard Slatkin; and with Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops, both at Tanglewood and at Boston's Symphony Hall. She also appeared as part of the *Divas* at the Donmar series in London, produced for broadcast on PBS. In 2000, Audra made her New York Philharmonic debut in a concert production of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*.

Born into a musical family, Audra grew up in Fresno. She received her classical vocal training at The Juilliard School, graduating in 1993.

Peter Donovan (bass) has performed with the New York Philharmonic, New York Chamber Symphony, Orchestra of St. Luke's, American Symphony Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic, New York Virtuosi, and many others. He has also performed with many chamber music groups, including *Speculum Music*, *Broyhill Chamber Ensemble*, and the *Prism Ensemble*. His festival appearances include the Newport Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, Tanglewood Festival, Cape and Islands Festival, and the Rushmore Festival.

On the New York City jazz scene, Donovan has worked with Mike Longo, Fred Hersch, and Adam Rafferty. He is a member of *String Fever*, a "big band" of strings led by Marin Alsop, as well as *Daybreak Express Jazz Sextet*, which, through the Midori Foundation, has performed in New York City public schools since 1994. He also leads his own group, the Peter Donovan Band, which has performed at such venues as Birdland and the Museum of Modern Art. Donovan is a two-time recipient of the Meet the Composer grant for his jazz compositions.

Donovan has played for numerous Broadway shows, including *On The Town*, *High Society*, *Titanic*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Sunset Boulevard*, and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. He plays on the original cast recordings of *Floyd Collins* and *Saturn Returns*, both on the Nonesuch label. Donovan has also worked with Barbara Cook, Liza Minelli, and Audra McDonald.

Peter Donovan holds a bachelor's and a master's degree from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Eugene Levinson.

Dan Lipton (piano) is a musician and writer based in New York City, where his diverse career bridges pop music, film work, and theater. His writing is featured in the recent HarperCollins book *Working Musicians*, alongside legends like Carole King, Bruce Springsteen, and Keith Richards. Lipton has scored a number of award-winning short films, including Jeff Yorke's *Winner's Cup*.

(Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker Award) and Corey Rosen's Keep Clear. With collaborator David Rossmer, he has written the musicals JOE! and notes to MariAnne. Lipton was the original pianist for the Broadway musical The Full Monty and will be conducting the new musical Little Fish by Michael John LaChiusa at Second Stage Theatre in 2003. Other keyboard credits include Urinetown and Titanic (Broadway), Adam Guettel's Floyd Collins at the Goodman Theatre, and LaChiusa's Marie Christine at Lincoln Center Theater. Recordings include the Grammy-nominated The Full Monty original cast recording, A**hole Music, and his solo albums, Travelogue and Life in Pictures.

Dave Ratajczak (percussion) is a full-time percussionist in the New York metropolitan area. A highly versatile performer, he has performed and recorded with the Woody Herman Orchestra, Gerry Mulligan, Audra McDonald, the Boston Pops Orchestra, Rosemary Clooney, Eddie Daniels, Randy Sandke, Gerry Niewood, Grady Tate, Milt Hinton, and Kenny Rankin.

As a studio musician, Ratajczak's wide range of experience includes movie soundtracks (Dead Man Walking, Cradle Will Rock, Wolf, The Pelican Brief, Object of my Affection, It Could Happen To You, Miller's Crossing, Brighton Beach Memoirs, and Biloxi Blues) and numerous television and radio jingles.

On Broadway, he has performed in the orchestras for Tony Award-winning shows such as Titanic, City of Angels, Crazy For You, and The Music Man.

One of Ratajczak's career highlights involved recreating the role of jazz drumming great Gene Krupa with Bob Wilbur's orchestra in a Carnegie Hall performance celebrating the 50th anniversary of Benny Goodman's historic 1938 jazz concert.

Dave Ratajczak is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music.