

AUDRA MCDONALD

FRI, FEB 6, 2015 • 8PM

"ONE OF THE GLORIES OF
AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATER."

- *The New York Times*

PERFORMANCE BENEFACTOR

This performance is sponsored by Patricia and Thruston Morton.

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Audra McDonald, vocals
Andy Einhorn, music director/piano

Mark Vanderpoel, bass
Gene Lewin, drums

Program to be announced from the stage.

BIOGRAPHIES

AUDRA MCDONALD, VOCALS

Audra McDonald is unparalleled in the breadth and versatility of her artistry as both a singer and an actress. A record-breaking six-time Tony Award winner (*Carousel*, *Master Class*, *Ragtime*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*), she has also appeared on Broadway in *The Secret Garden*, *Marie Christine* (Tony nomination), *Henry IV*, and *110 in the Shade* (Tony nomination). The Juilliard-trained soprano's opera credits include *La voix humaine* and *Send* at Houston Grand Opera and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* at Los Angeles Opera. On television, she was recently seen as the Mother Abbess in NBC's *The Sound of Music Live!* and played Dr. Naomi Bennett on ABC's *Private Practice* for four seasons. She has received Emmy nominations for *Wit*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and her role as official host of PBS's *Live From Lincoln Center*. Other TV credits include *The Good Wife*, *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years*, *The Bedford Diaries*, *Kidnapped*, and the 1999 remake of *Annie*. On film, she has appeared in *Seven Servants*, *The Object of My Affection*, *Cradle Will Rock*, *It Runs in the Family*, *The Best Thief in the World*, *She Got Problems* and *Rampart*.

A two-time Grammy Award-winner and exclusive recording artist for Nonesuch Records, she released her fifth solo album for the label, *Go Back Home*, in 2013. McDonald also maintains a major career as a concert artist, regularly appearing on the great stages of the world and with leading international orchestras. An ardent proponent of marriage equality and an advocate for at-risk and underprivileged youth, she sits on the boards of Broadway Impact and Covenant House. Of her many roles, her favorites are the ones performed offstage: wife to her husband, actor Will Swenson, and mother to her daughter, Zoe Madeline.



ANDY EINHORN, MUSIC DIRECTOR/PIANO

Andy Einhorn boasts Broadway credits for *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella* (OBCR), *Evita* (OBCR), *Brief Encounter*, *The Light in the Piazza* and *Sondheim on Sondheim* (OBCR, Grammy nomination). Most recently he served as the music director and conductor for the Broadway production of Woody Allen's *Bullets*

Over Broadway (OBCR). His tour work includes *Sweeney Todd*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *Mamma Mia!* and *The Lion King*.

Einhorn has worked at Goodspeed Opera House, Signature Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and PaperMill Playhouse. He was principal vocal coach and pianist for Houston Grand Opera's *An Evening with Audra McDonald*, a double-bill of Poulenc's *La voix humaine* and Michael John LaChiusa's *Send*. He has served as music director and pianist for Audra McDonald since 2011, performing with her at many venues including the Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Opera, Avery Fisher Hall and Carnegie Hall. Highlights of his 2014-2015 season engagements with Ms. McDonald include concerts at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Carnegie Hall, and Teatro Real in Madrid. He has also music directed for Barbara Cook at Feinstein's and Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music.

Cast albums include *Stage Door Canteen* and Ms. McDonald's newest release, *Go Back Home*. He served as the music director for HBO's Peabody Award-winning documentary *Six by Sondheim* and music supervisor for Great Performances' Peabody Award-winning special *Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy* on PBS. He is an honors graduate of Rice University.



GENE LEWIN, DRUMS

Gene Lewin appears on 34 CDs, with several more soon to be released. His eclectic discography ranges from the modern jazz of Fundementalia to the electric-violin pop of GrooveLily. Several straight-ahead jazz projects and singer-songwriter efforts round out the list.

Gene drums, sings and composes for GrooveLily, a trio that has been together for 16 years and has toured extensively in the US and Canada. While they have morphed through many different musical scenes (and hair styles), they are now focused on creating hybrid musical theatre – performances that feel both like concert and story. The band's credits in this area include a production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (directed by Tina Landau), *Striking 12*, and the autobiographical show *Wheelhouse*, which had its world premiere in 2012 at TheatreWorks in Mountain View, CA. Gene is also active in New York City's jazz scene, performing and recording with many well-respected singers and instrumentalists. He has appeared on CDs with bassists John Patitucci and Scott Colley, guitarists Ben Monder and Steve Cardenas, jazz legend tenor saxophonist George Coleman, bassist/vocalist Jay Leonhart, and many others.

BIOGRAPHIES

Originally an engineering major at Princeton University, Gene soon changed paths and returned to school to receive a master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music in 1991. He sends love to wife Suzanne and sons Elias and Jacob.



MARK VANDERPOEL, BASS

Mark Vanderpoel is a native of San Diego. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California, San Diego where he studied with Bertram Turetzky, and a master's degree from the California Institute of the Arts. Mr. Vanderpoel is a former member of the San Diego Symphony as well as various other chamber groups from the area, in addition to ensembles based in the Baja California region of Mexico. His extensive theater credits include *Legally Blonde*, *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella*, *See What I Wanna See*, *Guys and Dolls*, the PBS special *A Broadway Celebration on In Performance at the White House*, *Jane Eyre*, *Bullets Over Broadway*, and many others. Mr. Vanderpoel's stage and sideman credits include Audra McDonald, Kristin Chenoweth, Kelli O'Hara, Nancy Sinatra, Victoria Clark, Shirley Jones, Sir Cliff Richard, Deborah Voigt, Sandra Bernhard, Clay Aiken, Taylor Hicks, David Johansen, Sigur Rós, Jeff Beck, and Andrea Bocelli. Passions include surfing and using his Vitamix.



RYAN GRIFFIN on AUDRA MCDONALD



A trailblazer in today's cultural landscape, Audra McDonald has overcome the boundaries of genre and style and has rightfully established herself as one of America's preeminent performers. If her record six Tony Awards and two Grammy Awards are any indication, we are about to share a truly unforgettable evening.

While my first introduction to Audra came through her role as Grace in the 1999 film adaptation of *Annie*, it was her Tony Award-winning performance as Bess in *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* in 2012 that affirmed my lasting appreciation and respect for her work. As *Porgy and Bess* was being translated from Gershwin's original four hour long folk opera to fit the conventions of modern-day musical theater, any number of actors could have been chosen to portray the character of Bess in a new way. From her classical vocal training at Juilliard to her numerous theater credits and ceaseless dramatic gifts, it seems entirely possible that Gershwin had written the role for Audra. I remember being completely floored by her performance. After witnessing the honest and raw portrayal of Bess' mounting internal struggle, one thing was exceedingly clear: Audra McDonald is not simply an actor or singer – she is a storyteller.

As a singer, I find great inspiration in Audra's storytelling gifts. Artists spend years honing their craft, all in an effort to most effectively connect with their audiences. I have experienced very few performers who connect with their roles, and in turn their audiences, in the manner that Audra does. Her ability to transport spectators to another time and place, if only for a brief hour or two, is a reminder of the visceral nature of performance and the poignant moments and experiences that tie us together as humans. While each of us has encountered uniquely different experiences in our lives, we all can relate to the universal themes of love, joy and loss and the emotions they provoke. As I continue my vocal studies, I find myself looking to performers like Audra in hopes of finding an authenticity and truthfulness in my work that others can relate to.

We are extremely fortunate to welcome Audra McDonald to Chapel Hill this evening in her Memorial Hall debut. I encourage you to sit back, clear your mind and allow yourself to get lost in this singular shared experience.

Ryan Griffin is a 2013 graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill with a Bachelors of Music in Vocal Performance. He is the Box Office Assistant Manager at Carolina Performing Arts. 