



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2016

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
and
Artistic Advisor at Large Renée Fleming
announce programming for the inaugural season of**

Renée Fleming ***VOICES***

**New series crosses genres to showcase
the extraordinary power and vitality of the human voice**

**Artists include Lawrence Brownlee, Billy Childs, Alan Cumming,
Rinde Eckert, Megan Hilty, Jane Monheit, and Leslie Odom Jr.**

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Artistic Advisor at Large Renée Fleming today announced the artists for the inaugural season of **Renée Fleming VOICES**, a new concert series that heralds the power of the voice across a wide range of genres. The series includes Broadway favorites such as *Hamilton* Tony Award® winner Leslie Odom Jr., Tony® winner Alan Cumming (*Cabaret*), and Tony® nominee and Kennedy Center audience favorite Megan Hilty, plus acclaimed jazz vocalist Jane Monheit, opera sensation Lawrence Brownlee, multidisciplinary performance artist Rinde Eckert, and composer and jazz pianist Billy Childs, who will bring to life his Grammy Award®-winning recording *Map to the Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro*.

“The range of human vocal expression is virtually limitless—there are as many kinds of voices as there are kinds of people. My goal for this new series at the Kennedy Center is to celebrate the best singing in styles that may be familiar, and also to expose audiences to types of vocal music that might be totally new to them,” said Ms. Fleming. “From the classical song

recital, to cabaret, bluegrass, rap, and world music, the common thread will be vocalism of exceptional quality or innovation, representing a diverse range of styles.”

The performances offered in Renée Fleming *VOICES* will take full advantage of the Kennedy Center’s wealth of performance spaces. Each concert has been scheduled in a venue with the size and acoustic character that best suits the music; featured performance spaces range from the intimate 324-seat Family Theater to the expansive 2,465-seat Concert Hall.

2016-2017 Schedule of Renée Fleming *VOICES*

Tuesday, October 18, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Family Theater

Lawrence Brownlee

“Lawrence Brownlee is one of the great tenors of our time. I can’t say enough about the quality of his singing. No one has better vocal mastery, and he is equally at home singing bel canto or new music, as witnessed by his triumph as Charlie Parker in the opera Yardbird. I’ve sung opposite Larry at the Met, and to hear his beautiful sound in the intimacy of the Family Theater will be a rare treat.”

Thursday, December 8, 2016 at 7 p.m.

Friday, December 9, 2016 at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Family Theater

Megan Hilty

“I first saw Megan Hilty in the television show Smash and was dazzled by her singing. Musical theater lovers have been following her since her 2004 debut as Glinda in the Broadway production of Wicked.”

Friday, February 3, 2017 at 7 p.m.

Family Theater

Rinde Eckert

“I first heard Rinde Eckert wandering through a dinner event as a performance artist, singing and playing the accordion, and I was mesmerized. I admire artists who push the envelope, and Rinde merges gesture, language, and song in utterly original ways. I think his audiences experience something similar to what people must have felt centuries ago when the very first operas were created.”

Saturday, March 11, 2017 at 8 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

Leslie Odom Jr.

“Imagine a performer who could edge out Lin-Manuel Miranda for a prize, any prize. Last month, Leslie Odom Jr. won the 2016 Tony Award® for Best Actor in a Musical for his performance in Hamilton, which I was fortunate to see. I also heard him at the Kennedy Center Spring Gala. He is a consummate, elegant artist, and this is a performance not to miss.”

Friday, March 31, 2017 at 8 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

Billy Childs—*Map to the Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro*

“It was a thrill to join Billy Childs on the recording of Map to the Treasure with my Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor colleague Yo-Yo Ma. Billy is a brilliant pianist, composer, and arranger, and Laura Nyro was a truly great American songwriter. Billy’s interpretations of her songs are fresh and deeply moving.”

Saturday, April 29, 2017 at 8 p.m.

Concert Hall

Alan Cumming—*Alan Cumming Sings Sappy Songs*

“Alan Cumming is that rare kind of actor, who is convincing in any kind of role, but also invests everything he does with his own personal stamp. He is famous for his virtuosic Macbeth onstage, and his role on television’s The Good Wife, but now he’s tackling another discipline. As amazing as he was in the Broadway musical Cabaret, his performances in the genre of cabaret are becoming known for their fearless honesty.”

Friday, May 5, 2017 at 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

Family Theater

Jane Monheit—*The Ella Fitzgerald Centennial Celebration*

“One of our greatest living jazz vocalists, Jane Monheit combines the virtuosity of the most highly trained classical singers with the sensibility of a jazz stylist and a truly gorgeous, uniquely beautiful sound. To hear her celebrate Ella Fitzgerald, a legend of this genre, will be amazing.”

Additional events in the Renée Fleming VOICES concert series will be added in the coming months.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for most engagements in the Renée Fleming VOICES series will go on sale to Kennedy Center members on Monday, July 25, 2016, and to the general public on Monday, August 1, 2016. Patrons can purchase tickets in person at the Kennedy Center Box Office, call Instant Charge at (202) 467-4600, or visit the Kennedy Center website at www.kennedy-center.org.

Ticket information for the Lawrence Brownlee performance on Tuesday, October 18, 2016 will be announced soon.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Hailed by the Associated Press as one of “the world’s leading bel canto tenors,” American-born **Lawrence Brownlee** captivates audiences and critics around the world. His voice, praised by NPR as “an instrument of great beauty and expression...perfectly suited to the early nineteenth century operas of Rossini and Donizetti,” has brought him to the top of the opera world, ushering in “a new golden age in high male voices” (*The New York Times*). His most recent recording of *Virtuoso Rossini Arias* was nominated for a Grammy Award[®], and prompted *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross to ask “is there a finer Rossini tenor than Lawrence Brownlee?” One of the most in-demand singers around the world, Brownlee was recently nominated for “Male Singer of the Year” by the International Opera Awards. He has performed with nearly every leading international opera house and festival, as well as major orchestras including the Berlin

Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and the Bayerische Rundfunk Orchestra. He has appeared on the stages of top opera companies around the globe, including the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Bavarian State Opera, Royal Opera House, Vienna State Opera, Opera National de Paris, Opernhaus Zürich, Berlin State Opera, Teatro Real Madrid, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, and the festivals of Salzburg and Baden-Baden. In addition to his acclaimed bel canto performances, Brownlee has also originated contemporary roles including Lorin Maazel's *1984* and, most recently, Opera Philadelphia's world premiere of *Yardbird*, based on the life story of iconic jazzman Charlie Parker. He returns to Washington National Opera in November 2016 in the virtuoso role of Tonio in *The Daughter of the Regiment*.

Megan Hilty, a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, is a venerable American musical theater and television actress and singer. She rose to prominence for her Broadway roles as Glinda in *Wicked* and her portrayal of Doralee Rhodes in *9 to 5: The Musical*, Dolly Parton's adaptation of the popular film. She was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Actress in a Musical, an Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Actress in a Musical, a Drama League Award, and an Ovation Award for Best Actress in a Musical. During this time period, she made guest appearances on numerous television shows; her best known role was Ivy Lynn on the musical-drama TV series *Smash*, on which she sang many original songs, including the Grammy Award®-nominated "Let Me Be Your Star." From 2013–2014, she appeared in the role of Liz on the NBC comedy *Sean Saves the World*. In 2015, Hilty returned to the Broadway stage in *Noises Off*, delivering Tony Award®-nominated performance and receiving rave reviews. She also starred in a two-night-only presentation of *Annie Get Your Gun* at New York City Center. In addition to her eclectic career across Broadway and television shows, Hilty continues to maintain an active schedule not only with symphony orchestras throughout the United States and in solo concert at smaller venues, but also with her voiceover career, providing the voice of Rosetta in the *Disney Fairies* series.

Rinde Eckert, recipient of a 2007 Guggenheim Fellowship and finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Drama, is a world-renowned writer, composer, librettist, musician, performer, and director. His productions have toured throughout America and to major theater festivals in Europe and Asia. Eckert began his career as a writer and performer in the 1980s, writing librettos for Paul Dresher and dance scores for choreographers Sarah Shelton Mann and Margaret Jenkins, including *Woman, Window, Square* for The Margaret Jenkins Dance Company. He began composing and performing his own works in 1992. Staged works for solo performer include *Becoming... Unusual: The Education of an Eclectic*; three one-act plays: *An Idiot Divine*, *Romeo Sierra Tango*, and *Quit This House*; and works for radio including *Shoot the Moving Things* and *Four Songs Lost in a Wall*. Eckert was named an inaugural Doris Duke Artist in 2012. Other notable awards include a Grammy® for Best Small Ensemble Performance as a collaborator on the album *Lonely Motel* in 2011, two Critics Circle Awards, two Isadora Duncan Awards in San Francisco, a special Obie Award, and two Drama Desk Award Nominations in New York. He has also taught at Princeton University and continues to hold workshops at major universities across the U.S. He led a two-week teaching residency with the Departments of Theater and Dance at Towson University in 2015 and is currently co-teaching a course on creativity with Paul Dresher at the University of South Maine.

Multifaceted performer **Leslie Odom Jr.** was recently seen on Broadway starring as Aaron Burr in *Hamilton*, for which he won the 2016 Tony Award[®] for Best Leading Actor in a Musical. He is a Grammy Award[®] winner as a principal soloist on *Hamilton*'s Original Broadway Cast Recording, which won the 2015 award for Best Musical Theater Album. He originated the role of Burr in a sold-out run at The Public Theater in 2015, earning a Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical and a Lucille Lortel Award nomination for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical. He made his Broadway debut at the age of 17 in *Rent*, before heading to Carnegie Mellon University's prestigious School of Drama, where he graduated with honors. Additional theater credits include *Leap of Faith* on Broadway, for which he won the 2012 Astaire Award for Outstanding Male Dancer on Broadway and was nominated for a Drama League Award; the 2014 musical *Venice*, which also played at The Public Theater; and the Encores! Off-Center production of *Tick, Tick... Boom!*. On the small screen, Odom is best-known for his portrayal of Sam Strickland in the NBC musical series *Smash*, and his recurring role as Reverend Curtis Scott on *Law & Order: SVU*. On the big screen he starred in the 2012 film *Red Tails* opposite Terrence Howard, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and David Oyelowo. As a recording artist, his self-titled debut album was part-funded by a successful Kickstarter campaign which raised \$40,971. The album was released in 2014 by Borderlight Entertainment, Inc. Odom was raised in Philadelphia and currently resides in New York City.

Billy Childs has emerged as one of the foremost American pianist-composers of the 1990s, perhaps the most distinctly American composer since Aaron Copland. Like Copland, he has successfully married the musical products of his heritage with the Western neoclassical traditions of the 20th century in a powerful symbiosis of style, range, and dynamism. A native of Los Angeles, Childs grew up immersed in jazz, classical, and popular music influences. A prodigious talent at the piano earned him public performances by age six, and at 16 he was admitted to the USC Community School of the Performing Arts, going on to earn a Bachelor of Music degree in Composition under the tutelage of Robert Linn and Morton Lauridsen. By the time of his graduation from USC, Childs was already an in-demand performer in the L.A. jazz scene. Soon thereafter he was discovered by trumpet legend Freddie Hubbard, with whom he embarked on a successful performing and recording tour. He recorded and performed with a number of other influential jazz musicians including J.J. Johnson, Joe Henderson, and Wynton Marsalis before landing a record deal with Windham Hill Records in 1988, when he released *Take For Example, This...*, the first of four critically acclaimed albums for the label. The albums *Twilight Is Upon Us* (1989), *His April Touch* (1991), and *Portrait Of A Player* (1992) followed, each expansive contributions of depth and virtuosity. Simultaneously with his recording career, Childs has occupied a parallel niche as an in-demand composer, having worked with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, to name a few. He has also performed with Yo-Yo Ma, Sting, Renée Fleming, The Kronos Quartet, Dave Holland, and Chris Botti. Thus far in his career, Childs has garnered 13 Grammy[®] nominations and numerous awards including two for Best Instrumental Composition ("Into the Light" from *Lyric* and "The Path Among The Trees" from *Autumn: In Moving Pictures*), Chamber Music America Composer's Grant in 2006, and Doris Duke Performing Artist Award in 2013. In 2014, Childs paid tribute to one of his longtime idols, the late folksinger Laura Nyro, with the album *Map to the Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro*.

Born in Perthshire, Scotland, **Alan Cumming** has an eclectic career that has proved him as a renaissance man. From the theater to television to the big screen to writing a #1 *New York Times* best-selling memoir, Cumming's expansive list of credits earned him the Icon of Scotland title in 2005. *The Times* described him as a bawdy counter-cultural sprite. Cumming received traditional theater training at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He went on to work with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theater where he won an Olivier award for his performance in Dario Fo's *Accidental Death Of An Anarchist*. For the National Theater Studio, he directed Michel Tremblay's *Bonjour La, Bonjour* and played Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*. He was nominated for Olivier Awards for *La Bête* and *Cabaret*, and his sensational *Hamlet* at the Donmar Warehouse in London won him a TMA Best Actor award and a Shakespeare Globe nomination. He has moved effortlessly in his career from Shakespeare to *Cabaret* to the Hollywood blockbuster *X-Men*, to television series including *Sex and the City*, *Frasier*, and *The L Word*. He currently plays Eli Gold in the CBS series *The Good Wife*, for which he has received multiple Golden Globe, Emmy, SAG, Critic's Circle and Satellite Awards nominations. In Britain, he wrote and starred in the cult sitcom *The High Life*, as well as many other films for the BBC. Equally significant to his career in the entertainment field are his philanthropic endeavors and commitment to the progression of LGBT rights in Britain and the U.S. His activism and passion for various civil rights and sex education causes have earned him many humanitarian awards from AMFAR, Human Rights Campaign, the Matthew Shepard Foundation, GLAAD, and the Trevor Project, to name a few. Cumming's versatility as a performer, his sense of humor, his offbeat choice of roles, and his openness about his gay identity have brought him a loyal and varied audience.

Blessed with "a voice of phenomenal beauty" (*New York Times*), **Jane Monheit** has had plenty of milestone moments in establishing herself as one of today's best and most important American jazz and vocalist-musicians. A New York native, Monheit is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music where she received the William H. Borden Award for outstanding accomplishment in Jazz. She has released nine albums and two DVDs, and has appeared as a guest artist on many others. At 20, Jane became first runner-up in the 1998 Thelonious Monk Institute's vocal competition behind the late, great Teri Thornton. Soon after, she released her stunning debut album, *Never Never Land*, featuring Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and Lewis Nash. The first of four recordings for N-Coded—a label founded by Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen with Phil Ramone—the album was voted Best Recording Debut by the Jazz Journalists Association and stayed on the *Billboard* jazz chart for a year. *Come Dream with Me* (N-Coded) followed in 2001 with a No. 1 debut on the *Billboard* jazz chart and including a wider range of Monheit's influences, as well as popular jazz standards. Subsequent albums reflect Monheit's dual interests in jazz and cabaret: *Taking a Chance on Love*, a swinging survey of show tunes and her label debut for Sony (2004); the Christmas-themed *Season* (Sony, 2005); *Surrender* (Concord, 2007), which showed off her love of Brazilian music and paired her with none other than Ivan Lins, Sergio Mendes, and Toots Thielemans; and *The Lover, The Dreamers and Me* (Concord, 2009), with tunes by Paul Simon, Fiona Apple, and Burt Bacharach. Monheit has also been a featured performer in the nationally televised *Christmas at the White House*, the *Capitol Fourth of July Celebration*, and the *National Memorial Day Celebration*. She has appeared on numerous television shows including *Emeril*, Ramsey Lewis's *Legends of Jazz*, *Letterman*, *The View*, and *The Today Show*. She has collaborated with artists such as John Pizzarelli, Michael

Bubl , Ivan Lins, Terence Blanchard, and Tom Harrell, and has received Grammy® nominations for two of her recordings.

ABOUT REN E FLEMING

Ren e Fleming is one of the most acclaimed singers of our time. In 2016, she was named an Artistic Advisor at Large for The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where she participates in a variety of projects. In 2013, President Obama awarded her America’s highest honor for an individual artist, the National Medal of Arts. Winner of the 2013 Grammy Award for Best Classical Vocal Solo, Fleming has sung at momentous occasions around the world, from the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to last year’s Brandenburg Gate concert commemorating the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2012, in an historic first, she sang on the balcony of Buckingham Palace in the Diamond Jubilee Concert for HM Queen Elizabeth II. An additional distinction came in 2008 when she became the first woman in the 125-year history of the Metropolitan Opera to solo headline an opening night gala. She brought her voice to a vast new audience in 2014, as the first classical artist ever to sing the National Anthem at the Super Bowl.

The start of 2015 found Fleming at the Metropolitan Opera singing the title role in a new production of Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*, and she was heard in the role again in November at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Last April, she made her Broadway debut as an actress in the comedy *Living on Love*, for which she was nominated for a Drama League Award.

Fleming’s recital and concert schedule in recent years has spanned the globe, from South America to Australia to Europe and to Asia. In 2013, she joined with the Kennedy Center to present *American Voices*, a festival celebrating the best American singing in all genres. The festival was the subject of a *Great Performances* documentary on PBS in January of 2015.

A four-time Grammy® winner, Fleming won the 2013 Best Classical Vocal Solo Grammy Award® for *Po emes*. Her first-ever holiday album, *Christmas in New York*, was released in 2014. In recent years, this 14-time Grammy®-nominated artist has recorded everything from Strauss’s complete *Daphne* to the movie soundtrack of *The Lord of the Rings*. Her recent opera DVDs include Strauss’s *Arabella* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*; Handel’s *Rodelinda*, Massenet’s *Tha s* and Rossini’s *Armida*, all three in the Metropolitan Opera *Live in HD* series; and Verdi’s *La traviata*, filmed at London’s Royal Opera House.

Among her numerous awards are the Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Medal; Germany’s Cross of the Order of Merit; Sweden’s Polar Prize; the Chevalier de la L gion d’Honneur from the French government; Honorary Membership in the Royal Academy of Music; and honorary doctorates from Harvard University, Duke University, Carnegie Mellon University, the Eastman School of Music, and The Juilliard School.

In 2010, Fleming was named the first-ever Creative Consultant at Lyric Opera of Chicago, where she is also a member of the Board and a Vice President. She is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Hall Corporation, the Board of Sing for Hope, the Board of Trustees of Asia Society, and the Artistic Advisory Board of the Polyphony Foundation. www.reneefleming.com

ABOUT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America’s living memorial to President Kennedy. Under the leadership of Chairman David M. Rubenstein and President Deborah F. Rutter, the nine theaters and stages of the nation’s busiest performing arts facility attract

audiences and visitors totaling 3 million people annually; Center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts welcome 40 million more.

Opening its doors on September 8, 1971, the Center presents the greatest performances of music, dance, and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts education. With its artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, the Center's achievements as a commissioner, producer, and nurturer of developing artists have resulted in more than 300 theatrical productions, and dozens of new ballets, operas, and musical works.

Each year, millions of people nationwide take part in innovative, inclusive, and effective education programs initiated by the Center, including school- and community-based residencies and consultancies; age-appropriate performances and events for young people; career development for young actors, dancers, singers, and instrumentalists; and professional learning opportunities for teachers, teaching artists, and school administrators. These programs have become models for communities across the country. The Center's *Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child* program works with selected local school districts and seeks to provide a comprehensive arts education to children K-8. The Center also has been at the forefront of making the performing arts accessible to persons with disabilities, highlighted by the work accomplished with its affiliate, VSA.

As part of the Kennedy Center's Performing Arts for Everyone outreach program, the Center stages more than 400 free performances of music, dance, and theater by artists from throughout the world each year on the Center's main stages, and every evening at 6 p.m. on the Millennium Stage. The *Rubenstein Arts Access Program* expands the Center's efforts to make the arts accessible to children, young adults, and to people who have little or limited ability to attend and enjoy the performing arts, enabling audiences to engage in more ways, at more times, and in more places than ever before.

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