

CATHERINE RUSSELL

APR 16 / Pasant Theatre

Catherine Russell, vocals

Matt Munisteri, guitar and Music Director

Domo Branch, drums

Tal Ronen, bass

Ben Paterson, piano

Program will be announced from stage.

The performance will run approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

Media partner: WKAR



View the digital program at
whartoncenter.com/program

Catherine Russell

Vocalist Catherine Russell is a native New Yorker, born into musical royalty. Her father, the late Luis Russell, was a legendary pianist/composer/bandleader. Louis Armstrong fronted the Luis Russell Orchestra on recordings and gigs in 1929-30 and from 1935-1940. Her mother, the late Carline Ray, was a pioneering vocalist/guitarist/bassist who performed with the all-female swing orchestra, The International Sweethearts of Rhythm; pianist/composer/arranger Mary Lou Williams; and Sy Oliver, among many others.

Catherine's professional life began early. She performed as a child dancer with Katherine Dunham's company, dancing for four seasons with the Metropolitan Opera's production of *Aida*. In 1980, Catherine graduated with honors from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She has toured and/or recorded with Steely Dan, David Bowie, Cyndi Lauper, Paul Simon, Jackson Browne, Michael Feinstein, Levon Helm, Toshi Reagon and Rosanne Cash, appearing on over 200 albums.

Her 2006 debut album, *Cat* (World Village/Harmonia Mundi), garnered rave reviews, paving the way for her 2008 sophomore release, *Sentimental Streak*. Catherine was a guest on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, PBS-TV's *Tavis Smiley Show*, and NPR's *Fresh Air*, Marian McParland's *Piano Jazz*; *Mountain Stage*; *World Café*, and *Jazz Night in America*. Catherine Russell's third

album, *Inside This Heart of Mine*, reached #1 on *JazzWeek* and *Roots Music Report* radio charts, while also charting on *Billboard* and reaching #1 on iTunes jazz charts. A fourth album, *Strictly Romancin'* was released in February 2012, and was awarded Prix du Jazz Vocal (Vocal Album of The Year) by the French Jazz Academy, Grand Prix du Hot Club de France, and a Bistro Award for Outstanding Recording. Also in 2012, Catherine Russell received a Grammy Award as a featured artist on the soundtrack album for the HBO-TV series, *Boardwalk Empire*.

In 2013, Catherine contributed 3 songs to the soundtrack of the film, *Kill Your Darlings*. Her 5th solo album, *Bring It Back*, was released worldwide in 2014 on the Jazz Village label, receiving a 5-star Review in *Downbeat Magazine*. In 2016, Catherine released her sixth solo album, titled *Harlem On My Mind*, featuring songs from the Great African American Songbook, for which she received a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album. Her seventh album as a band leader, *Alone Together*, was released in 2019 on Dot Time Records, and held the #1 position on the *JazzWeek* 2019 Year End chart for national airplay and received her second Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album. Also in 2019, Catherine appeared in the feature film *Bolden*, and contributed vocals to the soundtrack album by Wynton Marsalis. She appears as featured vocalist on three tracks on *Big Band Holidays II*, accompanied by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis. In 2022,

Catherine released her eighth album as a leader, *Send For Me*.

Catherine Russell has performed on four continents. She's been a hit at major jazz Festivals including Monterey, Newport, North Sea, JazzAscona, Montreal, Bern, Rochester International, Panama, Tanglewood, and at sold out venues like The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Scullers in Boston, The Dakota in Minneapolis, Jazz at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall in NYC, SFJazz in San Francisco, and Pasadena Pops in Los Angeles. *All Music Guide* says, "Russell emerged as a retro old school vocalist for the ages."

Catherine's repertoire features a selection of gems from the 1920s through the Present; vital interpretations, bursting with soul and humor. With an off-the-beaten-path song selection, sparkling acoustic swing, and a stunning vocal approach, Catherine Russell has joined the ranks of the greatest interpreters and performers of American Popular Song.

Matt Munisteri, Music Director/guitar

Matt Munisteri is a guitarist who has performed on several chart-topping jazz CDs. Matt is also a critically lauded songwriter and lyricist, an urban banjo-warrior and a sometime session musician, a sideman, singer, frontman, and an arranger whose ear-pulling re-inventions of well-traveled songs have contributed to

Grammy winning CDs for artists such as Loudon Wainwright and Catherine Russell.

After serving as the guitarist and principal songwriter for The Flying Neutrinos in the late '90's, Matt quietly self-released his debut CD *Love Story* in 2003. Word-of-mouth saw to it that it wound up on several critic's "Best Of" lists and garnered the number two slot on Amazon's Top Ten Jazz CDs of The Year. A formidable lyricist ("*Jazz musicians aren't supposed to be able to write lyrics that good*" —*The Village Voice*) his songs have been compared to Randy Newman, Mose Allison and Bob Dorough. Matt has been featured on France's ARTE television, profiled in *Downbeat* magazine, honored with *Acoustic Guitar Magazine's* Editor's Choice award, and been the subject of several broadcasts on *NPR*.

When not working on his own projects his primary sideman gigs for the last few years have been playing with violinist Mark O'Connor's Hot Swing; Henry Butler & Steven Bernstein's Hot Nine; and with Catherine Russell, for whom he also currently serves as Music Director.

Though an instrumentalist of prodigious technique and a relentless improviser, Matt has always felt a primary connection to songs, to their forms and emotional landscapes, and his skills and originality as an accompanist have led to calls to record with some of today's most soulful and individual singers. These include Holly Cole, Madeleine Peyroux, Lizz Wright, "Little"

Jimmy Scott, Geoff Muldaur, Sasha Dobson, and Kat Edmondson. Outside of the jazz world, Matt was a key player on Loudon Wainwright's 2010 Grammy-winning CD, *High Wide and Handsome – The Charlie Poole Project*, to which he contributed arrangements, guitar, and 5-string banjo. He is credited on over 70 CDs, including new releases by trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, and guitarist Howard Alden. In mainstream jazz contexts he has performed with The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Kenny Davern; Andy Stein; Matt Glaser; Tim Kliphuis; Vince Giordano's Nighthawks; Frank Vignola; Jon-Erik Kellso; Evan Christopher; Duke Heitger; Bob Wilbur; Bucky Pizzarelli; and Dick Hyman.

Matt's CD, *Still Runnin' Round In The Wilderness*, (2012) is the first volume of two planned CDs to explore the "lost" compositions of the under-recognized, but truly prototypical, American singer-songwriter Willard Robison. Matt is also a featured performer on the new release, *Hell Among the Hedgehogs*, (2012) a smoking hot twin guitar CD with The Hot Club of Cowtown's Whit Smith, and a CD from Musette Explosion, a decade-old band with accordionist Will Holshouser and tuba player Marcus Rojas. A 2023 CD release, *Jon-Erik Kellso and The EarRegulars, Live at the Ear Inn*, was featured on NPR's *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross, with Matt Munisteri and Jon-Erik Kellso being interviewed about the group they co-lead while also performing in studio.

Domo Branch, drums

Domo Branch is a New York-based drummer, composer, and producer who grew up in Portland, Oregon. A graduate of Grant High School, Branch was active on the Portland music scene throughout his teenage years, playing with Thara Memory's prestigious Pacific Crest Sinfonietta, numerous groups through the Alan Jones Academy of Music, and The Devin Phillips Quartet. He has worked with Jeff Hamilton, Taylor Eigsti, Kendrick Scott, and Sean Jones, among others, and earned the Presidential Scholarship from the Manhattan School of Music, where he graduated in 2022. Branch has performed and/or toured with Catherine Russell, Dianne Reeves, Mike Phillips, Wynton Marsalis and the JLCO. In 2022, he released his first album *We Are Made* featuring Stefon Harris. In Portland, he is part of the Noah Simpson Quartet and co-leads an ensemble with longtime friend Charlie Brown III called The Brown Branch Jazz Orchestra.

Tal Ronen, bass

Born in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1981, Tal Ronen is an accomplished young bass player living and working in New York City. As a highly sought-after sideman, Tal has been a frequent band member with many notable musicians such as Frank Wess, Jimmy Cobb, Harry Whitaker, Sheila Jordan, and many more. Ronen also leads his own group featuring his own original compositions, as well as being a main collaborator and songwriter for up and coming artist Dida Pelled.

Ronen has played at many prominent New York venues, most notably Jazz at Lincoln Center, Village Vanguard, Iridium, the Kitano, Smalls and Mezzrow. He is a frequent presence on the world stage, participating in various international festivals around the world including the Sibiu Jazz Festival (Romania), the Gyor International Art Festival (Hungary), Jazz-en-Tete in Clairmont-Ferrand (France) and many other acclaimed venues, such as the North Sea Jazz Club in Amsterdam and Sunset Jazz Club in Paris. In Israel, he has been a frequent participant of local jazz festivals such as the international Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eilat, the Israel Festival in Jerusalem, the Tel-Aviv Jazz festival, the Haifa Jazz festival and others. His style has been described as “swinging and lyrical... I was delighted by the big warm sound he got... His pulse was absolutely right, although never obtrusive, and his solo lines were worthy of being transcribed” (Michael Steinman, *Jazz Lives*) “Easily one of the best bassists of his generation ... a truly gifted accompanist ... with exuberant, swinging solos” (*Arts America*).

Ronen graduated from the prestigious art high school Thelma Yellin in Israel and served the Israeli Army as a bassist in the Army Jazz ensemble, enjoying an outstanding musician status. A two-time scholarship recipient from the American-Israeli Cultural Foundation, he also won several competitions for ensemble playing at

the Rimon Jazz School. He received his BFA from The City College of New York, Magna Cum Laude, in 2009.

Ben Paterson, piano

"As soulful a pianist/organist as exists anywhere."

—*Downbeat Magazine*

Combining a joyful swing with an impeccable touch, Steinway Artist Ben Paterson has established himself as one of the most exciting pianists on the jazz scene today, garnering international acclaim for his superb musicianship and engaging performances. He has led his own groups on both piano and Hammond B3 at premier clubs and festivals around the world and is regularly called upon to work with some of the top names in jazz. Notable collaborations include work with Catherine Russell, Bobby Broom, Houston Person, Samara Joy and NEA Jazz Master Von Freeman to name a few, with performances opening for groups like Steely Dan and B.B. King. More info at www.benpaterson.com.