

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New York City Center announces additional casting for 2022 Encores! Season

**Lear deBessonnet embarks on first season as Artistic Director
with Music Director Rob Berman and Producing Creative Director Clint Ramos**

**Special two-week run of *Into the Woods* to honor
the legendary Stephen Sondheim**

Tickets start at \$35

December 3, 2021/New York, NY—New York City Center today announced additional casting for the 2022 Encores! Season as part of the full calendar of events for City Center’s 2021 – 2022 Season. The productions launch **Lear deBessonnet**’s first season as Encores! Artistic Director, alongside Encores! Music Director **Rob Berman** and Encores! Producing Creative Director **Clint Ramos**.

The Tony-honored series opens February 2 – 6 with ***The Tap Dance Kid***, featuring music by Henry Krieger, lyrics by Robert Lorick, and a book by Charles Blackwell. Directed by Tony Award-winner **Kenny Leon** (*A Raisin in the Sun*), the production also includes new tap sequences by choreographer **Jared Grimes** (*After Midnight*) and a concert adaptation by **Lydia Diamond** (*Stick Fly*). Broadway’s **Joseph Joubert** (*Caroline or Change*) will guest music direct *The Tap Dance Kid*.

Joining the cast are **Tracee Beazer** (Carole), **DeWitt Fleming Jr.** (Daddy Bates), **Joshua Henry** (William), **Shahadi Wright Joseph** (Emma), **Chance K. Smith** (Winslow), **Adrienne Walker** (Ginnie), and **Alexander Bello** as Willie. **Trevor Jackson** will now step into the role of Uncle Dipsey. **Dulé Hill**, who was previously announced in the role, is no longer able to perform due to scheduling conflicts.

Following is twelve-time Tony-nominated musical (including Best Musical) ***The Life***, March 16 – 20, with music by Cy Coleman, lyrics by Ira Gasman, and book by David Newman, Ira Gasman, and Cy Coleman. Emmy and Tony Award-winning artist **Billy Porter** (*Pose*, *Kinky Boots*) adapts the story and directs the Encores! production. **Alexandra Grey** (Queen), **Antwayn Hopper** (Memphis), and **Erika Olson** (Mary) join previously announced cast members **Mykal Kilgore** (Young Jojo), **Ledisi** (Sonja), and **Ken Robinson** (Fleetwood). **Destan Owens** will now step into the role of Old Jojo in place of **Chuck Cooper**, who was previously announced in the role.

The Life also features choreography by Tony-nominated choreographer **AC Ciulla** (*Footloose*), stepping in for Encores! Creative Advisor Camille A. Brown. Broadway's **James Sampliner** (*Prince of Broadway*) will guest music direct.

From May 4 – 15, Stephen Sondheim (music and lyrics) and James Lapine's (book) Tony Award-winning musical ***Into the Woods***, directed by **Lear deBessonet**, will usher in a new annual tradition celebrating an iconic American musical and the ways theater connects us across generations. This special two-week run of *Into the Woods* will be dedicated to the late Stephen Sondheim, whose beloved musicals have been highlights of the Encores! Series.

The production will feature choreography by film and television's **Jamal Sims** (film: *Aladdin*) and music direction by Encores! Music Director **Rob Berman**. **Jordan Donica** (Rapunzel's Prince) and **Shereen Pimentel** (Rapunzel) join the cast alongside newcomers **Julia Lester** (Little Red Riding Hood) and **Cole Thompson** (Jack). *Into the Woods* also features previously announced cast members **Sara Bareilles** (Baker's Wife), **Christian Borle** (Baker), **Heather Headley** (Witch), and **Ashley Park** (Cinderella).

The **Spring Gala | Encores! *Into the Woods*** takes place on opening night (May 4) and includes a post-performance benefit dinner with the cast and creative team at The Plaza Hotel. Gala packages are on sale now starting at \$2,500. For additional details, contact SpecialEvents@NYCityCenter.org or call 212.763.1205.

Additional casting for all three Encores! productions will be announced at a later date.

Encores! single tickets are on sale now and start at \$35. Tickets can be purchased online at NYCityCenter.org, by calling 212.581.1212, or at the City Center Box Office. New York City Center is located at 131 W 55th St between Sixth and Seventh avenues.

New York City Center is committed to following the latest health and safety protocols. Accordingly, City Center is a fully vaccinated venue—artists, crew, staff, and audience members are required to provide proof of full Covid-19 vaccination. Approved masks must be worn by audience members, staff, and crew. For the latest information on updated health, safety, and ticket policies, visit NYCityCenter.org/PlanYourVisit.

Leadership support for Encores! is provided by the Stacey and Eric Mindich Fund for Musical Theater.

Major support for Encores! is provided by the Ford Foundation and the Howard Gilman Foundation.

Encores! Season sponsors include Roz and Jerry Meyer, The Shubert Foundation, the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for Encores!, and the Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust.

Major support for *Into the Woods* is provided by the Estate of Douglas S. Cramer, Jr. and Margot and John Ernst. Additional support is provided by the Marta Heflin Foundation.

Additional support for Encores! is provided by The Kaplen Brothers Fund, The Frederick Loewe Foundation, Daryl and Steven Roth, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc., The SHS Foundation, The Ted Snowdon Foundation and the New York State Council on the Arts.

THE TAP DANCE KID

Feb 2 – 6, 2022

Wed – Fri 7:30pm; Sat 2 & 8pm; Sun 2 & 7pm

Music by **Henry Krieger**

Lyrics by **Robert Lorick**

Book by **Charles Blackwell**

Based on the novel *Nobody's Family is Going to Change* by **Louise Fitzhugh**

Concert Adaptation by **Lydia Diamond**

Choreography by **Jared Grimes**

Guest Music Director **Joseph Joubert**

Directed by **Kenny Leon**

Featuring **Tracee Beazer, Alexander Bello, DeWitt Fleming Jr., Joshua Henry, Trevor Jackson, Shahadi Wright Joseph, Chance K. Smith, and Adrienne Walker**

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THE LIFE

Mar 16 – 20, 2022

Wed – Fri 7:30pm; Sat 2 & 8pm; Sun 2 & 7pm

Music by **Cy Coleman**

Lyrics by **Ira Gasman**

Book by **David Newman, Ira Gasman, and Cy Coleman**

Choreography by **AC Ciulla**

Guest Music Director **James Sampliner**

Adapted and directed by **Billy Porter**

Featuring **Alexandra Grey, Antwayn Hopper, Mykal Kilgore, Ledisi, Erika Olson, Destan Owens, and Ken Robinson**

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INTO THE WOODS

Special two-week run

May 4 – 15, 2022

Week 1: Wed 6pm (Spring Gala), Thu & Fri 7pm, Sat 2 & 8pm, Sun 2 & 7pm

Week 2: Tue – Fri 7pm, Sat 2 & 8pm, Sun 2pm

Music and lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim**

Book by **James Lapine**

Choreography by **Jamal Sims**

Music Director **Rob Berman**

Directed by **Lear deBessonet**

Featuring **Sara Bareilles, Christian Borle, Jordan Donica, Heather Headley, Julia Lester, Ashley Park, Shereen Pimentel, and Cole Thompson**

NEW YORK CITY CENTER (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. Manhattan's first performing arts center, City Center was founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with the mission of making the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. This commitment continues today through celebrated dance and musical theater series including the Fall for Dance Festival, the Tony-honored Encores! and Encores! Off-Center, and the newest series Artists at the Center and City Center Dance Festival. The distinctive neo-Moorish theater welcomes over 300,000 annual visitors to experience internationally acclaimed artists on the same stage where legends like George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, Barbara Cook, José Ferrer, Martha Graham, and Paul Robeson made their mark. Home to a roster of renowned national and international companies including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, City Center's Principal Dance Company, and Manhattan Theatre Club, City Center's dynamic programming, art exhibitions, studio events, and master classes, are complemented by education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to over 11,000 New York City students, teachers, and families each year. NYCityCenter.org

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