



Celebrity Series of Boston Presents

Audra McDonald

Friday, April 13, 2018, 8pm — Symphony Hall
[McDonald high-res photo](#) | [McDonald video preview](#)
[Celebrity Series Press Room](#)

(Boston) Celebrity Series of Boston will present Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award-winning singer and actress [Audra McDonald](#) in concert on Friday, April 13, 2018, at 8pm at Symphony Hall, 301 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, MA. This performance marks Audra McDonald's 7th appearance with the Celebrity Series; her debut performance was in 2000, and she was seen most recently in 2015. Additionally, she opened the Celebrity Series' 2011-2012 season.

The program will be announced from the stage, and McDonald will be joined by pianist Brian Hertz, drummer Gene Lewin, and bassist Mark Vanderpoel.

Tickets start at \$50, and are available online at www.celebrityseries.org, by calling (617) 482-6661 Monday-Friday 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m., or at Symphony Hall's Hall Box Office, 301 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA. This performance is generously sponsored in part by Foley & Lardner LLP.

McDonald is also the recipient of **the 2018 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT**. The prestigious award recognizes innovative talent and includes a \$100,000 prize awarded at a gala in her honor and an artist residency, during which McDonald will present a public talk "Performing the Present: Audra McDonald and Oskar Eustis in Conversation at MIT" on April 14, 2018 about her career in musical theater, film, and television. Further information about the public program may be found at arts.mit.edu/mcdermott.

About Audra McDonald

Audra McDonald is unparalleled in the breadth and versatility of her artistry, as both a singer and an actress. The winner of a record-breaking six Tony Awards, two Grammy Awards, and an Emmy Award, she was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people of 2015 and received a 2015 National Medal of Arts—America's highest honor for achievement in the arts—from President Barack Obama. Blessed with a luminous soprano and an incomparable gift for dramatic truth-telling, she is as much at home on Broadway and opera stages as she is in roles on film and television. In addition to her theatrical work, she maintains a major career as a concert and recording artist, regularly appearing on the great stages of the world.

Born into a musical family, McDonald grew up in Fresno, California, and received her classical vocal training at the Juilliard School. A year after graduating, she won her first Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical for *Carousel* at Lincoln Center Theater. She received two additional Tony Awards in the featured actress category over the next four years for her

(more)

performances in the Broadway premieres of Terrence McNally's *Master Class* (1996) and *Ragtime* (1998), for an unprecedented total of three Tony Awards before the age of 30. In 2004 she won her fourth Tony, starring alongside Sean "Diddy" Combs in *A Raisin in the Sun*, and in 2012 she won her fifth—and her first in the leading actress category—for her role in *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*. In 2014 she made Broadway history and became the Tony Awards' most decorated performer when she won her sixth award for her portrayal of Billie Holiday in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*—the role which also served as the vehicle for her 2017 debut on London's West End. In addition to setting the record for most competitive wins by an actor, she also became the first person to receive awards in all four acting categories. McDonald's other theater credits include *The Secret Garden* (1993), *Marie Christine* (1999), *Henry IV* (2004), *110 in the Shade* (2007), her Public Theater Shakespeare in the Park debut in *Twelfth Night* (2009), and *Shuffle Along, Or, The Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed* (2016).

McDonald made her opera debut in 2006 at Houston Grand Opera, where she starred in a double bill: the monodrama *La voix humaine* by Francis Poulenc and the world premiere of *Send* by Michael John LaChiusa. She made her Los Angeles Opera debut in 2007 starring alongside Patti LuPone in John Doyle's production of Kurt Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. The resulting recording won McDonald two Grammy Awards, for Best Opera Recording and Best Classical Album.

On the concert stage, McDonald has premiered music by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer John Adams and sung with virtually every major American orchestra—including the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and San Francisco Symphony—and under such conductors as Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Leonard Slatkin. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1998 with the San Francisco Symphony under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas in a season-opening concert that was broadcast live on PBS. Internationally, she has sung at the BBC Proms in London (where she was only the second American in more than 100 years invited to appear as a guest soloist at the Last Night of the Proms) and at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, as well as with the London Symphony Orchestra and Berlin Philharmonic.

It was the Peabody Award-winning CBS program *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years* that introduced McDonald to television audiences as a dramatic actress. She went on to co-star with Kathy Bates and Victor Garber in the lauded 1999 Disney/ABC television remake of *Annie*, and in 2000 she had a recurring role on NBC's hit series *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. After receiving her first Emmy nomination for her performance in the HBO film version of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Wit*, directed by Mike Nichols and starring Emma Thompson, McDonald returned to network television in 2003 in the political drama *Mister Sterling*, produced by Emmy Award-winner Lawrence O'Donnell, Jr. (*The West Wing*) and starring Josh Brolin. In early 2006 she joined the cast of the WB's *The Bedford Diaries*, and over the next season she had a recurring role on NBC's television series *Kidnapped*. In 2008 she reprised her Tony-winning role in *A Raisin in the Sun* in a made-for-television movie adaptation, earning her a second Emmy Award nomination. From 2007 to 2011, she played Dr. Naomi Bennett on the hit ABC medical drama, *Private Practice*. In 2013, her critically acclaimed performance as the Mother Abbess in NBC's live telecast of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*, opposite Carrie Underwood as Maria, was watched by an estimated 18.5 million people across America. McDonald has performed on numerous Tony Awards telecasts; in 2013, she closed the show by performing a rap duet with Neil Patrick Harris.

A familiar face on PBS, McDonald has headlined telecasts including an American Songbook season-opening concert, a presentation of Sondheim's *Passion*, a Rodgers and Hammerstein tribute concert titled *Something Wonderful*, and five galas with the New York Philharmonic: a New Year's Eve performance in 2006, a concert celebrating Sondheim's 80th birthday, Carnegie Hall's 120th anniversary concert, *One Singular Sensation! Celebrating Marvin Hamlisch*, and, most recently, *Sweeney Todd*. She was also featured in the PBS television specials *A Broadway Celebration: In*

Performance at the White House and A Celebration of American Creativity, singing at the request of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. McDonald has appeared three times on the Kennedy Center Honors; been profiled by *60 Minutes*, *Today*, *PBS NewsHour*, and *CBS Sunday Morning*; been a guest on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and *David Letterman*, *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, *The Colbert Report*, *Charlie Rose*, *CBS This Morning*, *NewsNation with Tamron Hall*, *PoliticsNation with Al Sharpton*, *Iron Chef America*, *The Megan Mullally Show*, *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, *The Tavis Smiley Show*, *The Wendy Williams Show*, and *The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore*; and has guest co-hosted on *The View* with Barbara Walters. In 2012, McDonald was named the new official host of the PBS series *Live From Lincoln Center*, and she won her first Primetime Emmy Award for hosting the Creative Arts Special Program in 2015, having previously been nominated in 2013. In 2016, she received her fifth Emmy nomination for her role in HBO's film version of *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*. In 2018, she joins the cast of *The Good Fight* for the second season of the CBS All Access original drama series.

McDonald launched her film career with *Seven Servants* in 1996; her list of credits has since grown to include *The Object of My Affection* (1998), *Cradle Will Rock* (1999), *It Runs in the Family* (2003), *The Best Thief in the World* (2004), *She Got Problems* (2009)—a mockumentary movie musical written, starring, and directed by her sister, Alison McDonald—and *Rampart* (2012). She recently appeared opposite Meryl Streep in *Ricki and the Flash* (2015), and played Madame de Garderobe in Disney's live-action *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). She appears in the upcoming movie-musical *Hello Again*.

As an exclusive Nonesuch recording artist, McDonald released her most recent album, *Go Back Home*, in 2013. She has released four previous solo albums on the label, interpreting songs from the classic (Gershwin, Arlen, and Bernstein) to the contemporary (Michael John LaChiusa, Adam Guettel, and Ricky Ian Gordon). The *New York Times* named her first Nonesuch album, 1998's *Way Back to Paradise*, as Adult Record of the Year. Following the bestselling *How Glory Goes* in 2000 and *Happy Songs* in 2002, she released the 2006 album *Build a Bridge*, which saw the singer stretch her repertoire to include songs by the likes of Randy Newman, Elvis Costello/Burt Bacharach, Rufus Wainwright, and Nellie McKay. Her ensemble recordings include the acclaimed EMI version of Bernstein's *Wonderful Town* conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, the New York Philharmonic release of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, and *Dreamgirls* in concert, as well as the first recording of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Allegro* and Broadway cast albums of *Carousel*, *Ragtime*, *Marie Christine*, *110 in the Shade*, *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*, and *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*. She is also featured on a number of audiovisual recordings available on DVD and Blu-ray, including *Sondheim! The Birthday Concert*, *Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square*; *Weill—Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*; *Bernstein—Wonderful Town*; *Audra McDonald: Live at the Donmar, London*; and *My Favorite Broadway: The Leading Ladies*.

McDonald's other accolades include five Drama Desk Awards, five Outer Critics Circle Awards, five NAACP Image Awards nominations, an Ovation Award, a Theatre World Award, the Drama League's 2000 Distinguished Achievement in Musical Theatre and 2012 Distinguished Performance Award, a 2015 Rockefeller Award for Creativity, and Roundabout Theatre's 2016 Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre. In 2015, she was named to the Time 100—*Time* magazine's list of the most influential people in the world—and in 2017, honored as one of *Variety Magazine's Power of Women* alongside Chelsea Clinton, Blake Lively, and Gayle King. In 2013, she was honored as *Musical America's* "Musician of the Year," joining the esteemed company of previous winners such as Leonard Bernstein, Leontyne Price, Beverly Sills, and Yo-Yo Ma, and in 2017 she was inducted into Lincoln Center's Hall of Fame as a member of the inaugural class, which included Ma, Price, Placido Domingo, Louis Armstrong, and Harold Prince. Besides her six Tony wins, she has received nominations for her performances in *Marie Christine* and *110 in the Shade*. In 2016, McDonald received an honorary doctorate from Yale University.

In addition to her professional obligations, McDonald is a passionate advocate for equal rights, LGBTQ causes, and underprivileged youth. In 2014, she joined the Covenant House International Board of Directors, which oversees programs for homeless young people in 27 cities in six countries across the United States, Canada, and Latin America. McDonald's outspoken activism for marriage equality helped put the issue on the national agenda. In 2009, she joined Twitter to promote the cause, using the Twitter handle @AudraEqualityMc, and in 2011 she joined pro-equality marchers in Albany to lobby New York state senators in the days leading up their groundbreaking vote for legalization. McDonald was featured in marriage equality and anti-bullying campaigns for Freedom to Marry, NOH8, and PFLAG NYC. In 2012, she and her now husband, actor Will Swenson, received PFLAG National's Straight for Equality Award. A dog lover, she has two canine companions, Butler and Georgia, adopted from Eleventh Hour Rescue, a volunteer-based, non-profit organization that saves dogs from death row. Of all her many roles, her favorites are the ones performed offstage: passionate advocate for equal rights and homeless youth, wife to actor Will Swenson, and mother to her children.

About Celebrity Series of Boston

Celebrity Series of Boston was founded in 1938 by pianist and impresario Aaron Richmond. Over the course of its 79-year history, Celebrity Series has presented an array of the world's greatest performing artists. From orchestras and chamber ensembles, vocal and piano music, to dance companies, jazz, spoken word, and more, Celebrity Series has been bringing great artists to Boston's major concert halls for nearly eight decades. The Celebrity Series of Boston believes in the power of excellence and innovation in the performing arts to enrich life experiences, transform lives and build better communities. Through its *Arts for All!* community programs, the Celebrity Series seeks to build a community of Greater Boston where the performing arts are a valued, lifelong, shared experience—on stages, in schools, at home—everywhere.

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