



Sunday | November 20 | 3pm  
Calderwood Studio at GBH Boston

## *What Makes It Great?* with Rob Kapilow

**Rob Kapilow** piano, commentary  
**Ashley Blanchet** vocals  
**Michael Winther** vocals

Inventing America, Part 1  
**The Songs of Irving Berlin:**  
**An American Voice for Popular Music**

“You’re Just in Love” from *Call Me Madam*

“I Got Lost in His Arms” from *Annie Get your Gun*

“Puttin’ On the Ritz” from *Puttin’ On the Ritz*

“Cheek to Cheek” from *Top Hat*

“I Got the Sun in the Mornin’ (and the Moon at Night)”  
from *Annie Get Your Gun*

*Today’s program will run approximately 90 minutes, interspersing commentary and performance, with time for questions at the end. There will be no intermission.*

*Wifi Network: WGBH-Guests  
Password: hews-Hjx5uD*

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Rob Kapilow** piano, commentary

For more than 30 years, Rob Kapilow has brought the joy and wonder of classical music—and unraveled some of its mysteries—to audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Characterized by his unique ability to create an “aha” moment for his audiences and collaborators, whatever their level of musical sophistication or naiveté, Kapilow’s work brings music into people’s lives: opening new ears to musical experiences and helping people to listen actively rather than just hear.

Kapilow’s range of activities is astonishingly broad, including his *What Makes It Great?*® presentations (now for 25 seasons in New York and Boston), his family compositions and Family Musik® events, his Citypieces, corporate programs, and residencies with institutions as diverse as the National Gallery of Canada and Stanford University. The reach of his interactive events and activities is wide, from Native American tribal communities in Montana and inner-city high school students in Louisiana to audiences in Kyoto, Istanbul, and Kuala Lumpur, and from tots barely out of diapers to musicologists in Ivy League programs.

Kapilow is an award-winning composer, conductor, author, and commentator. He is currently working on a new large-scale choral/orchestral composition, *We Came to America*, based on inter-generational immigrant stories premiering in January 2024. A G. Schirmer composer of a wide range of solo, chamber, orchestral, and operatic music; he was the first composer to be granted the rights to set Dr. Seuss’ words to music, and his setting of *Green Eggs and Ham* has been called “the most successful piece written for families this half-century.”

He is currently working on two new books for Norton/Liveright—the first on the music of the Woodstock Generation—and he is an award-winning author of three previous books including *All You Have to Do is Listen*, which won the PSP Prose Award for Best Book in Music and the Performing Arts; *What Makes it Great?*, the first book designed for the iPad with embedded musical examples; and *Listening for America: Inside the Great American Songbook from Gershwin to Sondheim*, which was a finalist for the prestigious Marfield Prize.

Kapilow has had extensive media experience. He appeared on NBC’s *Today Show* with Katie Couric; he presented a special *What Makes It Great?*® for broadcast on PBS’s *Live From Lincoln Center*; and he was the subject of a full-length PBS documentary as a composer entitled *Summer Sun, Winter Moon*. A frequent guest on the PBS *NewsHour*, *Weekend Edition*, and *Morning Edition*, his *What Makes it Great?* radio series was broadcast for more than a decade on NPR’s *Performance Today*.

As a conductor he has led most of North America’s major orchestras as well as new works of musical theater, ranging from the Tony Award-winning *Nine on Broadway* to the premiere of *Frida* for the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale and the Eastman School of Music and student of the legendary Nadia Boulanger, he was an assistant professor and conductor of the Yale Symphony Orchestra for six years from the age of 23. He holds a black belt in Shorin-Ryu Karate.

## Ashley Blanchet vocals

Ashley Blanchet was most recently seen on Broadway as Dawn in *Waitress*. Other Broadway credits include *Frozen* (where she was first black woman to play the role of Elsa), *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Little Eva, The Locomotion), *Annie* (Star to Be), and *Memphis*. This summer she was Miss New Hampshire in the world premiere of the new musical *The Bedwetter*, written by Josh Harmon, Adam Schlesinger, and Sarah Silverman. Favorite regional credits include: *Cinderella* (Title role; Papermill Playhouse), *Oklahoma!* (Ado Annie; Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera), *How to Succeed... (Rosemary; Houston Theater Under the Stars)*, and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey; Kansas City Repertory Theater). Film/TV: *The Good Fight*, "Better Nate Than Ever," on Disney+, and the award-winning short animated film *Are You Okay?* for which she voiced the title character, Raquelle. Ashley received her BFA in musical theater from the University of Michigan, where she was awarded the Kurt Weill Award for Excellence in Theater. Ashley is also a proud alum of Boston Ballet, Dance Theater of Harlem, and the Walnut Hill School in Natick. Instagram: @a\_Blanchet!

## Michael Winther vocals

Michael Winther is marking his eighth appearance with Rob Kapilow's *What Makes It Great?* on the Celebrity Series. His Broadway credits include *Flying Over Sunset*, *33 Variations*, *Mamma Mia!*, *1776*, *Artist Descending a Staircase*, *The Crucible*, *Damn Yankees*, and *Fun Home*. Equally at home on the Broadway stage as in the concert hall and recording studio, Michael collaborated with multi-Grammy-nominated jazz composer Fred Hersch and poet Mary Jo Salter in the premiere of a new song cycle, *Rooms of Light*. He portrayed Albert Einstein in author and theoretical physicist Brian Greene's multimedia theater piece, *Light Falls*, in New York, Princeton, and Australia and also televised for PBS/WNET. Other highlights include "Dan" in the Pulitzer-winning musical, *Next to Normal*, at Baltimore/Centerstage; Frank London and Neil Berger's *A Night In the Old Marketplace* in São Paulo; Tectonic Theatre Company's *The Laramie Project Cycle* at BAM/Harvey Theatre; Fred Hersch's multimedia jazz-theatre piece, *My Coma Dreams* in NYC, Berlin, and San Francisco; and *Merrily We Roll Along* at City Center Encores!®. His regional credits include productions at Center Theatre Group/LA, Guthrie Theater, Yale Rep, McCarter Theater, Old Globe, Goodspeed Musicals, Theatreworks/Palo Alto, La Jolla Playhouse, George Street Playhouse, Perseverance Theater, O'Neill Theatre Center, and Sundance Theatre Lab. His recent film credits include *The Avengers*, *Jumper*, *The Break-Up*, and *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*. Recent television credits include "Hunters," "The Blacklist," "Mysteries of Laura," "Boardwalk Empire," "Hostages," "Leverage" and "Law & Order."

Michael received Drama Desk and Drama League nominations for the critically acclaimed off-Broadway solo theatrical song cycle, *Songs From An Unmade Bed* at New York Theater Workshop. Over the years, the cast recording on Ghostlight Records has garnered a devoted following.

He has appeared with Rob Kapilow in *What Makes It Great?* at Lincoln Center and in major venues across the country. Other concert credits include four appearances as part of Lincoln Center's American Songbook series (William Finn's Songs of Innocence and Experience, The Songs of Fred Hersch, and two consecutive years of his solo evening, Hear & Now: Contemporary Lyricists and Composers); Broadway Cabaret, Broadway by the Year, and Broadway Unplugged series at Town Hall; New Voices Collective at Symphony Space; as well as concerts with the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall, the White House, and with the New York Philharmonic. He has performed solo evenings of music at 54 Below, Joe's Pub, Birdland, and Ars Nova. Michael is a graduate of the Hotchkiss School and Williams College.

  
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