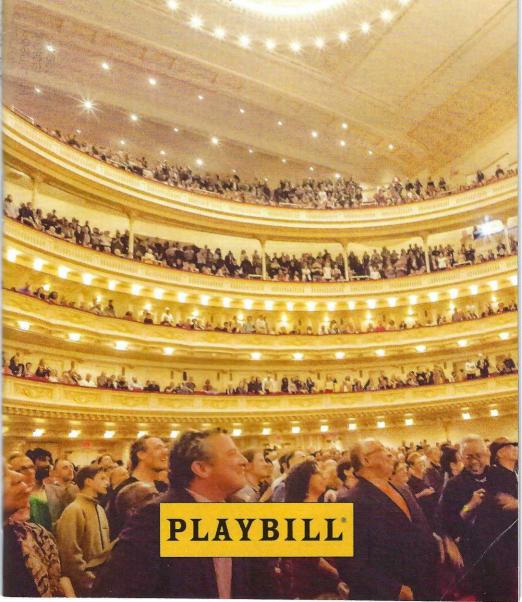


# NOVEMBER

2019-2020 SEASON | ISAAC STERN CENTENARY





presents

78th Concert Season

# Let 'Em Eat Cake

Music by GEORGE GERSHWIN

Lyrics by IRA GERSHWIN

Book by GEORGE S. KAUFMAN and MORRIE RYSKIND

Concert Script Adaptation by Laurence Maslon

MasterVoices Orchestra of St. Luke's

Ted Sperling, Conductor and Director

Andrew Palermo, Musical Staging
Tracy Christensen, Costume Coordinator
Maarten Cornelis, Lighting Designer
Scott Lehrer, Sound Designer
Gregory R. Covert, Stage Manager

Bryce Pinkham John P. Wintergreen

performance underwritten by Frank Skillern

Mikaela Bennett Mary Wintergreen

performance underwritten by Sarah Billinghurst Solomon

David Pittu\* Kruger

performance underwritten by the Faith Geier

Artist Initiative

Kevin Chamberlin Alexander Throttlebottom

performance underwritten by The Roger Rees

Fund for Musical Theater

Christopher Fitzgerald Narrator/Tweedledee

performance underwritten by the Hargrove

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Fashion Show Models: Jennifer Molly Bell, Lauren Tucker Cross, Lindsey Gaynor, Lauren Jiang, Samantha Kahn, Madelyn Miyashita

Fashion show wardrobe courtesy of Rent the Runway.

\*Faith Geier Artists

Tonight's performance will be performed with a 15-minute intermission.

Supertitles are provided by Digital Tech Services, and are underwritten by Susan L. Baker and Adèle K. Talty.

Let 'Em Eat Cake (Concert Version) is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.mtishows.com

This performance is funded in part by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; The Geier Foundation; the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Philanthropic Fund; the Hargrove Pierce Foundation; and The Roger Rees Fund for Musical Theater, as well as:







#### Let 'Em Eat Cake

#### ACT I

Overture

Tweedledee for President (Ensemble)

The Supreme Court (Supreme Court)

Union Square (*Kruger and Ensemble*)

Comes the Revolution (Throttlebottom and Ensemble)

Mine (Wintergreen, Mary and Ensemble)

On and On (Ensemble)

Finale Act I: I've Brushed My Teeth (Lieutenant, General Snookfield)

On and On and On (reprise)

All the Mothers of the Nation (Mary and Women of the Ensemble)

Let 'Em Eat Cake (Wintergreen and company)

#### Intermission

#### **ACT II**

Opening Act II: Blue, Blue, Blue (Wintergreen and Ensemble)

The League of Nations (Mary, Wintergreen, Kruger, Diplomats, Interpreters, Army)

Up and At 'Em (Supreme Court and Ensemble)

The Trial of Throttlebottom (Company)

The Trial of Wintergreen (Company)

Hanging Throttlebottom in the Morning (Lieutenant and Ensemble)

Finale Ultimo (Entire Company)

# Notes on the program

1933 was not a good year. In the depths of the Great Depression, one out of every four adults was out of work. A series of vast dust storms devastated the heartland of the United States. In Germany, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor. (On the plus side, Prohibition was finally repealed.)

Against this dark background, the creators of the Pulitzer prize-winning musical Of Thee I Sing-George Gershwin, music; Ira Gershwin, lyrics; and George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind, book-decided to write a sequel. The original show had satirized the American political system, telling the story of John P. Wintergreen, who runs for president of the United States—and wins—on a platform of Love, promising to marry the winner of a national beauty contest. Although it contained some biting and cynical satire, the show had maintained a lighthearted mood. Let 'Em Eat Cake. mirroring the year of its birth, would prove to be much darker and more problematic. Like its predecessor, it satirized politics and the Supreme Court. To this it added commentary on the army, Fascists, radicals, the League of Nations, businessmen, fashion, and even baseball.

Let 'Em Eat Cake featured many elements that were familiar to audiences from the earlier musical. It reprised "Wintergreen for President," "Of Thee I Sing," and the theme song of the Supreme Court. And many characters returned, reenacted by the same actors who had starred in Of Thee I Sing—President and Mrs. Wintergreen, the Supreme Court, and especially Alexander Throttlebottom, the hapless vice president whom no one ever

recognized. During the run of *Of Thee I Sing*, Throttlebottom had become so beloved by the public that his name entered the language as a synonym for a harmless incompetent in public office.

Wintergreen and his confederates are voted out of office in favor of John P. Tweedledee. After the Supreme Court refuses to throw out the election results, the politicians open a shop selling blue shirts designed by Mary Wintergreen. When the business fails, they decide to start a revolution. The one thing they have a lot of is blue shirts, and Wintergreen explains, "You can't have a revolution without shirts." (In 1933, it was not yet clear how terribly unfunny the brownshirts of Germany and the blackshirts of Italy would prove to be.) With the help of the army (who has been bribed by being offered the war debt), Wintergreen seizes President Tweedledee and declares a dictatorship of the proletariat. He is in turn deposed by the radical rabble-rouser Kruger. Before the end of the evening, the audience will see the Supreme Court in chains, most of the main characters condemned to be executed, Throttlebottom with his head in the guillotine, and the military threatening to take control of the country.

Musically, the show was very ambitious. As he would in his next score, *Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin was aiming at a creation which used the language of Broadway but the formal complexity and structure of an opera. Music and dialogue were integrated, and the music carried the action. He drew on wide-ranging influences including Handel, Schubert, Gilbert and Sullivan, military marches, Yiddish music, and the blues. The opening

number was a reprise of "Wintergreen for President" from the earlier musical. This song already had incorporated "Tammany," The Sidewalks of New York" and "A Hot Time in the Old Town." Tweedledee's campaign song made use of "Dixie," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Hail Columbia," and "Over There," as well. And these two complex songs were juxtaposed against each other in counterpoint.

Of Thee I Sing had already featured an unusual amount of counterpoint, but Let 'Em Eat Cake took this much further. Gershwin said, "I've written most of the music for this show contrapuntally, and it is that very insistence on the sharpness of a form that gives my music the acid touch it has—which paints the words of the lyrics, and is in keeping with the satire of the piece." Explaining his reliance on counterpoint by turning to its greatest creator, he added, "I feel that Bach will still live when everyone later than Bach has been centuries forgotten-because there is the logic and the wit and the solidity of scientific form in everything he wrote."

When the show opened out of town in Boston, it was one of the year's hottest tickets: a pair of opening night tickets sold for the huge sum of \$17.50. An estimated two hundred audience members came up from New York for the occasion. Reviews were warm. The *Traveler* called it "a brilliant successor to its famous predecessor," and added "the smart audience ate every crumb with enthusiastic relish."

It opened in New York on Oct 21, 1933. The New York reviews were more mixed. *New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson praised it as, "a wild, taut, witty, pessimistic bludgeoning of Knavish politics." But he added, "After a hilarious first act it becomes merciless

and mirthless, and considerably less amusing. . . It is not the hearty, guffawing burlesque that began the legend." Beyond the dark subject matter, there were several complaints. There was no love interest. The second act was staged entirely in shades of blue—and while this elegantly reflected the plot, it was tedious to look at.

The main problem, however, was the sophistication of the music. Reviewers didn't quite know what to make of it. "For all I know," said the critic John Anderson, the music "may be great stuff, but you can't wet a whistle with it, or take it out for dancing in the streets." The *Catholic World* suggested that the musical would be more appropriately reviewed by a music critic rather than someone from the drama desk.

After ninety performances, Let 'Em Eat Cake closed, and it was never revived. Only one piece, the love song "Mine," earned a place outside the show; it was recorded by Judy Garland and Bing Crosby. (This song derived from an exercise Gershwin had written when he was taking lessons in counterpoint.) For years much of the music and book were believed to be lost, although there were a few attempts at reconstruction, but in 1978 the composer's handwritten notes were discovered in the Library of Congress. From this, the Broadway scholar John McGlinn reconstructed a detailed vocal score, which was then orchestrated by Russell Warner, drawing on the memories of people who had been involved in the original production.

Conductor Michael Tilson Thomas became an advocate of the work, which he conducted in a concert performance in 1987 at the Brooklyn Academy. "Let 'Em Eat Cake has operatic dimensions," he said. "You can hear Porgy and Bess emerging from the musical textures. The score is so deep and rich

that it is impossible to comprehend fully with just one hearing."

Let 'Em Eat Cake, virtually unheard since 1933 has certainly not followed the same path as the triumphant *Porgy* 

and Bess. But George Gershwin was perhaps equally proud of it. Its music, he said, was his "claim to legitimacy."

> By Janet B. Pascal, MasterVoices Writer-in-Residence

# THE Artists

### **TED SPERLING,** Conductor

Ted Sperling is celebrating his seventh season as Artistic Director of MasterVoices. He won Tony and Drama Desk Awards for his orchestrations of The Light in the Piazza, for which he was also music director. Other Broadway credits include rapturously received revivals of My Fair Lady, Fiddler on the Roof, The King and I, and South Pacific; Guys and Dolls, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, The Full Monty, How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, My Favorite Year, and Sunday in the Park with George. Off-Broadway credits include A Man of No Importance, A New Brain, Saturn Returns, and Floyd Collins. Opera work includes two NYC premieres with MasterVoices by composer Ricky Ian Gordon: 27 starring Stephanie Blythe, and The Grapes of Wrath, starring Nathan Gunn; Dido and Aeneas starring Kelli O'Hara;

and La Voix Humaine starring Audra McDonald. Stage direction includes world premieres of Red Eve of Love. The Other Josh Cohen, See What I Wanna See, Striking 12, and Charlotte: Life? Or Theater?, and a revival of Lady in the Dark. Recent gala performances include Show Boat with Vanessa Williams, The Making of A Chorus Line with Zachary Quinto, The Pirates of Penzance with Kevin Kline, Cabaret with Anne Hathaway, Song of Norway with Judy Kaye, She Loves Me with Santino Fontana, and Lady in the Dark with Victoria Clark. Mr. Sperling received the 2006 Ted Shen Family Foundation Award for leadership in musical theater, headed the Music Theater Initiative at The Public Theater, and is is training the next generation of theater musicians at NYU. TV: SNL, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel. Visit tedsperling.net.

# LAURENCE MASLON, Concert Script Adaptation

Laurence Maslon is celebrating his 25th year as an arts professor at Tisch's Graduate Acting Program, where he's also the associate chair. He is the host and producer of the weekly radio series, *Broadway to Main Street* for the NPR-affiliate station WPPB-FM, and the series just won the ASCAP Foundation Award for Outstanding Radio Broadcast/Internet Program. He is the

writer and coproducer of the American Masters documentary, Sammy Davis, Jr.: I've Gotta Be Me, broadcast on PBS earlier this year. He edited the Library of America's acclaimed edition of George S, Kaufman plays, Kaufman & Co. Broadway Comedies. His most recent book is the companion volume to Come From Away, and he's written a dozen other books on the American

musical theater as well as articles for the New York Times, Washington Post,

# BRYCE PINKHAM, John P. Wintergreen

Broadway: A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder (Tony, Drama Desk, Grammy Nominations), The Heidi Chronicles (Outer Critics, Drama League Nomination), Ghost, Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, Holiday Inn (no nominations, but people said they really liked them.) TV: Mercy Street,

The Get Down, Proven Innocent, Instinct, Blindspot, The Goodwife, Person of Interest. Countries visited: 22 and counting. Co-Founder of www. zaraaina.org. BA: Boston College, MFA in Acting and bio writing in the third person: Yale School of Drama. Follow: @theBrycecapades

# MIKAELA BENNETT, Mary Wintergreen

Mikaela Bennett is a graduate of The Juilliard School and is celebrated as a singer and actress for her work on stage and in the concert hall. In 2019 Mikaela was honored with a 'Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists'. On stage, Mikaela made her professional debut starring as Penelope in The Golden Apple at City Center Encores! Mikaela starred as Maria in West Side Story at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and in the title role in Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella at the MUNY. Mikaela originated the role of Norma in Dick Scanlan and Carmel Dean's new musical Renascence in New York City and at the Prototype Festival she originated the title role of Acquanetta in a new opera composed by Michael Gordon. In the concert hall Mikaela has performed with some of the world's leading orchestras and in 2019 made her return to the BBC Proms which was broadcast live on British TV. Mikaela appeared as Maria in a concert performance of West Side Story with the John Wilson Orchestra at the 2018 BBC Proms, has performed with the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Slatkin, the Philadelphia Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra under Michael Tilson Thomas, Mikaela has also appeared as a soloist at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall.

# **DAVID PITTU, Kruger**

David Pittu is a two-time Tony nominee, for his work in Hal Prince's LoveMusik and the Mark Twain/David Ives comedy Is He Dead? Other Broadway credits include The Front Page, The Coast of Utopia, Never Gonna Dance and the upcoming Girl from the North Country, which transfers this spring after a sold-out run last year at the Public. Earlier this year he appeared with MasterVoices in Lady in the Dark at City Center. He has received Drama Desk, Lortel

and Outer Critics' Circle nominations for his work Off-Broadway, and the St Clair Bayfield Award for his work in *Twelfth Night* at the Delacorte with Anne Hathaway and Audra McDonald. Other Off-Broadway highlights include *What's That Smell: The Music of Jacob Sterling*, (for which he also wrote the book and lyrics, music by Randy Redd; Outer Critics' Circle nominations for Best Off-Broadway Musical and Best Actor in a Musical), *Equivocation* (MTC), *The Heir Apparent* (CSC), City

Center/Encores! revivals of Of Thee I Sing, Bells Are Ringing, It's a Bird, It's a Plane...It's Superman, and Big River. Film and TV credits include Peter Jackson's King Kong, all the Law & Order series, Damages, House of Cards, and much more, including

HBO's upcoming *The Plot Against America*. David is also a prolific audiobook narrator and received the Best Male Solo Performance Audie Award for *The Goldfinch*. Other MasterVoices concerts: *The Firebrand of Florence*, *Of Thee I Sing*.

### KEVIN CHAMBERLIN, Alexander Throttlebottom

Kevin Chamberlin has been nominated for 3 Tony Awards: Horton in Seussical, Dirty Blonde, and Uncle Fester in The Addams Family. Other Broadway credits include: Disaster, The Ritz, Chicago, Triumph of Love, My Favorite Year. Film: Die Hard with A Vengeance,

Road to Perdition, Taking Woodstock, Suspect Zero, Christmas with the Kranks TV: A Series of Unfortunate Events, Modern Family, Frasier, Grace and Frankie and Bertram on Disney Channel's Jessie!

### CHRISTOPHER FITZGERALD, Narrator/Tweedledee

Broadway: Waitress (Tony nomination; Outer Critics' Circle Award and Drama Desk Award winner for best featured actor in a musical), An Act Of God, The Merchant Of Venice, Finian's Rainbow (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle nominations), Young Frankenstein (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle nominations), Wicked original cast, AMOUR (Drama Desk nomination), Chicago. Off-Broadway: The Winter's Tale and The Cripple Of Inishmaan (Public),

Saturday Night (Second Stage. Drama Desk nomination), Gutenberg! The Musical! (Actors' Playhouse), Observe The Sons Of Ulster... (Lincoln Center), Die Fledermaus (Metropolitan Opera). Series regular on SyFy's Happy!, Netflix's Godless, DirecTV's Almost There, WB's Twins. Starred in film, Girl Most Likely, opposite Kristen Wiig. Other TV: The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (recurring), Blindspot, Elementary, The Good Wife, NBC Pilot Next Caller.

# FRED APPLEGATE, Francis X. Gilhooley

Broadway: The Ferryman (Uncle Pat), Wicked (Wizard), Tuck Everlasting (Joe), The Last Ship (Fr. O'Brien), La Cage aux Folles (Ms. Renaud), Sister Act (Msgr. O'Hara), Young Frankenstein (The Hermit), The Producers (Max, Broadway and London), Sound of Music (Max). Fanny! at Encores! and Happiness at Lincoln Center. National Tours: Wicked, Anything Goes, The Producers, Beauty and the Beast. Regional Theaters: Alliance, Mark Taper Forum, Geffen Playhouse,

Old Globe, St. Louis Rep, Guthrie (Resident Artist, 3 years, 13 productions). Recent television: Crashing, Billions, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, Person of Interest; series regular: Newhart, FM, Life and Stuff, Woops!, and Nine to Five; recurring: Night Court, Cosby and Growing Pains; also: Will and Grace, Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman, ER, Seinfeld, Touched by an Angel, Northern Exposure... and many more. He is married to Cherie Sprosty, Liturgy Director at the Shrine

of St. Frances Cabrini, dedicated to the patron saint of immigrants. They have three children: Ben, Meredith and Ethan.

# BILL BUELL, General Adam Snookfield, U.S.A.

Bill Buell's Broadway credits include: Ink, Cyrano, The History Boys, Inherit the Wind, Urinetown, 42nd Street, Titanic, Tommy, Big River, Annie. Off-Broadway includes: Rancho Viejo, Kin, and Tumacho. Shakespeare in the Park: Tartuffe, The Winter's Tale,

and Twelfth Night. Film and television includes: 7 Seconds, Sneaky Pete, Across the Universe, Spy Game, Welcome to the Dollhouse, The Love Letter, Requiem for a Dream, Quiz Show, Kinsey, Boardwalk Empire, 30 Rock, Blue Bloods, Curb Your Enthusiasm.

### CHUCK COOPER, Matthew Arnold Fulton

Chuck Cooper won the Tony award for his performance in Cy Coleman's "The Life." He has been featured in 16 Broadway shows in every theatrical genre from Shakespeare to musical comedy. His most recent guest starring TV appearances include "New Amsterdam," "City on a Hill," "Bull," "Power," "The Good Wife," "House of

Cards," and "Madam Secretary." Other awards: The Lucille Lortel Award, The San Diego Critics' Circle Award, The Audelco Award, and Two Drama Desk Nominations. His favorite role is Eddie, Alex and Lilli's father. He is gratefully married to playwright Deborah Brevoor. www.chuckcooper.net.

# LEWIS J. STADLEN, Louis Lippman

Has starred on Broadway in Fish in the Dark, The Nance, The Producers, 45 Seconds from Broadway, The Man Who Came to Dinner (Drama Desk Award nomination), Laughter on the 23rd Floor, the 1996 production of A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (Tony Award nomination), the female version of The Odd Couple, the 1974 production of Candide (Tony Award nomination), The Sunshine Boys, and Minnie's Boys (Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and Theatre World

Awards). In addition, he has starred in the national tours of Hello, Dolly!, The Producers, Guys and Dolls, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, Oklahoma!, The Time of Your Life, and Fiddler on the Roof. He received the Irish Times award for his performance at Dublin's Gate Theatre production of Arthur Miller's The Price. His film and television credits include In & Out, To Be or Not to Be, Windy City, The Verdict, Serpico, Portnoy's Complaint, "Smash," "Damages," and "The Sopranos."

# EDSEL ROMERO, Lieutenant

Edsel Romero is a New York City based actor. Originally from North Texas, he received his bachelor's of music in music education (choral) from the University of North Texas. A classically trained baritone, Edsel joined MasterVoices in their 75th anniversary season and has had the privilege to perform at venues including Carnegie Hall, New York City Center, Alice Tully Hall, and the Rose Theatre at Jazz Lincoln Center.

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MasterVoices (formerly The Collegiate Chorale) was founded in 1941 by legendary American choral conductor Robert Shaw and has been under the artistic direction of Tony Award-winner Ted Sperling since 2013. Known for its versatility, the group's repertoire ranges from choral masterpieces and operas in concert to operettas and musical theater; it is also known for highly theatrical performances of rarely-heard works such as last season's Lady in the Dark by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin, Victor Herbert's Babes in Toyland, Scott Joplin's Treemonisha, Tchaikovsky's Maid of Orleans, and Rossini's Moïse et Pharaon. The group regularly commissions and premieres new works; recent seasons included works by Ricky Ian Gordon and Randall Eng.

As the country's first interracial and interfaith chorus, the group performed

at the opening of the United Nations and has sung and recorded under the batons of esteemed conductors including Serge Koussevitzky, Arturo Toscanini, Leonard Bernstein, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, and Alan Gilbert. It has been engaged by top-tier orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Israel Philharmonic, and has appeared at the Verbier and Salzburg Festivals.

Concerts regularly feature an inclusive roster of world-class soloists from across the musical spectrum, including Bryn Terfel, Stephanie Blythe, Deborah Voigt, Eric Owens, Nmon Ford, John Holiday, Kelli O'Hara, Paulo Szot, Bebe Neuwirth, and Victoria Clark, along with cross–disciplinary collaborations with such diverse creative minds as *Vogue* Editor-at-Large Hamish Bowles, Silk Road visual

artist Kevork Mourad, and acclaimed choreographer Doug Varone. Roger Rees was the group's Artistic Associate from 2003–2015.

For more information, visit master-voices.org. Connect with Master-Voices on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@mastervoicesny).

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\* Side-By-Side student member\*\* Side-By-Side graduate member

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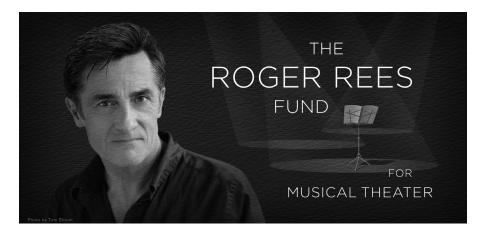
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