

LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III & CHRIS SMITHER

WXPN WELCOMES

Zellerbach Theatre
Sunday, February 1 @ 7 PM

There will be an intermission between artists.



This performance is a WXPN Welcomes event.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Loudon Wainwright III

Born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 1946, Wainwright came to fame when "Dead Skunk" became a Top 20 hit in 1972. He had studied acting at Carnegie-Mellon University but dropped out to partake in the Summer of Love in San Francisco and wrote his first song in 1968, "Edgar," about a lobsterman in Rhode Island. He was soon signed to Atlantic Records by Nesuhi Ertegun, and after that was lured by Clive Davis to Columbia Records, which released "Dead Skunk." His songs have since been recorded by Bonnie Raitt, Johnny Cash, Earl Scruggs, Kate & Anna McGarrigle, his son, Rufus Wainwright, and Mose Allison, among others. Wainwright has recorded 27 albums, including his 2009 Grammy® Award-winning *High Wide & Handsome*.

In 2022, Wainwright released *Lifetime Achievement*, an album of 15 original songs that established his singular talent as our foremost six-string tragicomedian, not only undiminished, but hitting new heights. The orchestration varies from solo performance and trio work with his longstanding musical cohorts, Chaim Tannenbaum and David Mansfield, to Nashville and Memphis-style little big bands and a full-blown string arrangement by Rob Moose. Wainwright puts his latest achievement in the context of a lifetime of music making this way: "When I made my first record for Atlantic in 1969, I wanted to make not only a recording, but a document that captures a moment. Now, fifty years later, I guess I still want to make a testament of songs, and I like to think they might last a while."

In 2020, Wainwright unveiled the album *I'd Rather Lead a Band*, in which he is featured as a vocalist with Vince Giordano and The Nighthawks. The 14-song collection of classic songs from the 1920s and '30s was widely acclaimed. During the pandemic, Wainwright produced several virtual shows, including *The Special Relationship* (presented by the Royal Albert Hall) and *The Great Unknown*, a musical tribute to his friend, the late George Gerdes. That show also featured Richard Thompson, Suzanne Vega, Steve Forbert and the members of Spinal Tap.

In 2018, Wainwright released *Years in the Making*, a 42-song treasury of rare and unreleased Loudoniana. This two-disc, 60-page hardbound audio-biography of his 40-year career includes orphaned album cuts, lovingly made lo-fi home recordings, radio appearances, demos, live performances and beyond. It features appearances by Kate McGarrigle, Suzzy Roche, Bill Frisell, Van Dyke Parks, Chaim Tannenbaum, David Mansfield and the Wainwright children, Rufus, Martha, Lucy and Lexie. In 2017, Wainwright published his memoir, *Liner Notes* (Blue Rider Press), which led to appearances on *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross and *WTF* with Marc Maron. *The New York Times* said the book "makes your heart wobble on its axis." Wainwright also created a one-man theatrical show, *Surviving Twin*, which combines his songs and the writings of his late father. Initially developed as part of University of North Carolina's Playmakers series, it focuses on fatherhood—both being a father and having one—and explores the issues of birth, self-identity, loss, mortality, fashion and, of course, pet ownership. *Surviving Twin* has been performed in limited theatre engagements and is available as a Netflix special, produced by Judd Apatow and directed by Christopher Guest.

Wainwright has co-written with songwriter/producer Joe Henry on the music for Judd Apatow's hit movie, *Knocked Up*, written music for the British theatrical adaptation of the Carl Hiaasen novel *Lucky You*, and composed topical songs for NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* as well as ABC's *Nightline*. An accomplished actor, he has appeared in films directed by Martin Scorsese, Hal Ashby, Christopher Guest, Tim Burton, Cameron Crowe and Judd Apatow. Wainwright also starred on TV in *M.A.S.H.* and *Undeclared*, and on Broadway in *Pump Boys and Dinettes*. More recently, he appeared in the film *Pleased to Meet You* with fellow music legends John Doe, Aimee Mann and Joe Henry, and the television series *Mosaic*, directed by Steven Soderbergh.

Chris Smither

Born in Miami during World War II, Smither grew up in New Orleans, where he first started playing music as a child. The son of a Tulane University professor, he was taught the rudiments of instrumentation by his uncle on his mother's ukulele.

In his early twenties, Smither turned his back on his anthropology studies and headed to Boston at the urging of legendary folk singer Eric von Schmidt. It was the mid-'60s and acoustic music thrived in the streets and coffeehouses. Smither forged lifelong friendships with many musicians, including Bonnie Raitt who went on to record his songs "Love You Like a Man" and "I Feel the Same." What quickly evolved from his New Orleans and Cambridge musical experiences is his enduring, singular guitar sound: a beat-driven finger picking, strongly influenced by the playing of Mississippi John Hurt and Lightnin' Hopkins, layered over the ever-present backbeat of his rhythmic, tapping feet—always mic'd in performance.

Smither's first albums *I'm A Stranger, Too!* (1971) and *Don't It Drag On* (1972) were released on Poppy Records, home of kindred spirit Townes Van Zandt. By the time Smither recorded his third album, *Honeysuckle Dog* with Lowell George and Dr. John helping out, United Artists had absorbed Poppy and ultimately dropped much of its roster, including Smither. He made his next record in 1985 when the spare *It Ain't Easy* on Adelphi Records marked his return to the studio.

By the early '90s, Smither's steady nationwide touring and regular release of consistently acclaimed albums cemented his reputation as one of the finest acoustic musicians in the country. His 1991 album, *Another Way to Find You*, was recorded live in front of an studio audience. His next recording, *Happier Blue*, was embraced by Triple A radio and received the NAIRD (now AFIM) award as Best Folk Recording of 1993. *Up On the Lowdown* (1995) marked the first of a trio of albums to be recorded with producer Stephen Bruton at The Hit Shack in Austin and his first of five albums with roots label HighTone Records. *Up On the Lowdown* sparked considerable attention abroad, and a

tour of Australia with Dave Alvin and extensive solo touring in Europe led to expanding global interest. His song "I Am the Ride" from this album inspired the independent film *The Ride*, for which Smither also composed the original score.

In early 1997, Smither released *Small Revelations*. It climbed the Americana and Triple A radio charts and led to concert dates with B.B. King, Bonnie Raitt, Nanci Griffith and the hugely successful, original Monsters of Folk tour with Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Dave Alvin and Tom Russell. *Small Revelations* also generated several film projects for Smither. Emmylou Harris recorded his song "Slow Surprise" for the *The Horse Whisperer* soundtrack on MCA. His recording of "Hold On" was used in the indie feature film *Love from Ground Zero*.

His CD *Drive You Home Again* (1999) garnered four stars from *Rolling Stone*. Shortly after, in 2000, Smither released his one-man-tour-de-force, *Live as I'll Ever Be*. Recorded in-concert at various clubs and concert halls in California, Dublin, Galway, Boston and Washington, D.C., *Train Home* (2003) was Smither's last record for HighTone and his first with producer David Goodrich. Smither's "Seems So Real" from the CD earned a Folk Alliance Award for Song of the Year.

In 2005, jazz great Diana Krall covered "Love Me Like a Man," introducing what is now a blues standard to a whole world of jazz fans. Shortly after, Smither's song "Slow Surprise" was included in the independent film, *Brother's Shadow*. In addition, Smither narrated a two-CD audio book recording of *Will Rogers' Greatest Hits*. Continuing to expand his creative horizon, Smither was invited to contribute an essay to *Sixty Things to Do When You Turn Sixty*, a 2006 collection of essays by American luminaries on reaching that milestone. In 2009, Melville House published *Amplified*, a book featuring 16 short stories by notable American performing songwriters. Smither's story, *Leroy Purcell*, about a touring musician's encounter with a Texas State Patrolman, leads off the collection.

With the release of his twelfth recording, *Leave the Light On* (2006), on his own imprint, Mighty Albert, Smither began a new label relationship with the renowned acoustic and modern folk label, Signature Sounds. He followed this with *Time Stands Still* (2009), his most stripped-down recording in some time, working with just two accompanists.

In 2011, Smither put out two fan projects: a collection of live tracks from newly discovered concert recordings from the 1980s-1990s titled *Lost and Found* and the rollicking EP *What I Learned in School*, on which Smither covered six classic rock-and-roll songs. Smither followed these projects with *Hundred Dollar Valentine* (2012), a five-star (MOJO) studio record of all Smither-penned songs. In 2014, Smither released *Still on the Levee* (2014), a double-CD retrospective. Recorded in New Orleans at the Music Shed, this career-spanning project features fresh takes on 24 iconic songs from his vast career and some very special guests including the legendary Allen Toussaint and Loudon Wainwright III.

In 2018, Smither released his eighteenth record, *Call Me Lucky* (Signature Sounds/Mighty Albert), once again teaming up with David Goodrich. In 2020, *More from The Levee*, the follow-up to the 50-year career retrospective *Still on the Levee*, was released. *Acoustic Guitar* said that Smither sings about "the big things – life, love, loss – in a penetrating and poetic yet unpretentious way."

His 20th album, *All About the Bones*, was released in 2024 on Signature Sounds/Mighty Albert, distributed by Redeye. Featuring eight brand new songs and his renditions of Eliza Gilkyson's "Calm Before the Storm" and Tom Petty's "Time to Move On," the album welcomes the listener into a mansion on an imaginary New Orleans street. Smither's inimitable propulsive guitar and rumbling baritone are joined to producer David Goodrich's carpetbag of instruments, Zak Trojano's rock-steady drumming, BettySoo's diaphanous harmony vocals and the flat, mournful flood of jazz legend Chris Cheek's saxophone.

25★26 SEASON

UPCOMING MUSIC

Tyshawn Sorey

*Members, Don't
Git Weary*

FEB 6

Johnny Gandelsman

This is America

FEB 14-15

Naturally 7

MAR 6

Kayhan Kalhor

MAR 8

Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain

APR 11

Delbert Anderson Quartet

APR 26

Arturo O'Farrill

Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble

MAY 8



Stefan Mager / Kate Barsby