



Jazz at Lincoln Center Presents  
**LADIES SING THE BLUES**

**Catherine Russell**, Vocals  
**Charenee Wade**, Vocals  
**Brianna Thomas**, Vocals  
**Mark Shane**, Piano  
**Matt Munisteri**, Guitar, Banjo  
**Tal Ronen**, Bass  
**Mark McLean**, Drums  
**Jon-Erik Kellso**, Trumpet  
**John Allred**, Trombone  
**Mark Lopeman**, Reeds

**PROGRAM**

*There will be no intermission.*

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**Saturday, October 1 @ 8 PM**

Zellerbach Theatre

**AFRICAN ROOTS,  
AMERICAN VOICES**

Part of the African Roots, American Voices series.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### **Catherine Russell** (Vocals)

Vocalist Catherine Russell is a native New Yorker, born into musical royalty. Her father, the late Luis Russell, was a legendary pianist/composer/bandleader serving as Louis Armstrong's long-time musical director. Her mother, Carline Ray, was a pioneering vocalist/guitarist/bassist who performed with International Sweethearts of Rhythm, Mary Lou Williams and Ruth Brown. Russell's professional life began early. After graduating with honors from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, she embarked upon musical adventures with Carrie Smith, Steely Dan, David Bowie, Cyndi Lauper, Paul Simon, Jackson Browne, Michael Feinstein, Levon Helm and Rosanne Cash, among others.

Her 2006 debut album, *Cat*, garnered rave reviews, paving the way for her 2008 sophomore release, *Sentimental Streak*. Russell has been a guest on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, PBS-TV's *Tavis Smiley Show* and NPR's *Fresh Air*, *Piano Jazz*, *Mountain Stage*, *World Café* and *JazzSet*. She has won a prestigious German Record Critics' Award and a Living Blues magazine's critics' poll. Russell's third album, *Inside This Heart of Mine*, reached #1 on JazzWeek and Roots Music Report's radio charts, while also charting on Billboard and reaching #1 on iTunes jazz charts. A fourth album, *Strictly Romancin'* was released in February 2012, and was awarded Prix du Jazz Vocal (Vocal Album of The Year) by the French Jazz Academy, Grand Prix du Hot Club de France, as well as a Bistro Award for Outstanding Recording. Also in 2012, Russell won a Grammy® Award as a featured artist on the soundtrack album for the HBO-TV series, *Boardwalk Empire*.

In 2013, Russell contributed three songs to the soundtrack of the film, *Kill Your Darlings*. Her fifth solo album, *Bring It Back*, was released worldwide in February 2014 and received a five-star review in *Downbeat Magazine*. In September 2016, Russell released her sixth solo album, *Harlem On My Mind*, featuring songs from the Great African American Songbook.

With universal acclaim, Russell has performed on four continents. She's been a hit at major jazz festivals including Monterey, Newport, North Sea, JazzAscona, Montreal, Bern, Rochester International, Panama and Tanglewood as well as at sold out venues like The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Scullers in Boston, The Dakota in Minneapolis, Jazz at Lincoln Center in NYC, SFJAZZ in San Francisco and Pasadena Pops in Los Angeles. *All Music Guide* says, "Russell emerged as a retro old school vocalist for the ages."

Her repertoire features a selection of gems from the 1920s through the present, all vital interpretations, bursting with soul and humor. With an off-the-beaten-path song selection, sparkling acoustic swing and a stunning vocal approach, Catherine Russell has joined the ranks of the greatest interpreters and performers of American popular song.

### **Charenee Wade** (Vocals)

Charenee Wade is not one to hold back or let fear stand in her way. The first artist ever to enter two Thelonious Monk Vocal competitions, she walked away from the second one in 2010 with instant buzz and a second place finish. Now is the time for Wade's star to rise. Known for expert vocal improvisational ability and a swinging groove, Wade evokes a classic jazz sound akin to Betty Carter and Sarah Vaughan, two of her musical touchstones. With her debut album, *Offering: The Music of Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson*, she pays tribute to another inspiration, the socially conscious poet and musician Gil Scott-Heron, and confirms that she too plans to use her artist platform thoughtfully.

The first full-length album tribute to Scott-Heron and his musical collaborator Brian Jackson by a woman artist, *Offering* is arresting in just how timely Scott-Heron's messages are today and how perfectly Wade delivers them through her savvy arrangements and intimate jazz interpretations. While she has earned many accolades – first runner-up in New York's Jazzmobile Vocal competition; a participant in Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead program; a feature

on NPR's *Song Travels*; a starring role in the off-Broadway show *Café Society* and in Jazz at Lincoln Center's Salute to Betty Carter – she may surprise people with this authentic tour de force.

Wade embodies Scott-Heron's poems deeply and with a pathos that belies her age. Her singing is effortless and inventive on the opening title track, and with her lithe voice floating around the poet's timeless words, we are invited into her invocation. "Song of the Wind" feels like a sacred exchange between the past and present and a testament to the peace we're still seeking today. "A Toast to The People" showcases her excellent storytelling ability and subtle vocal prowess. On "Home Is Where the Hatred Is," she and the band throw down the gauntlet both in terms of the powerful message and jazz chops on display.

Wade gives ample evidence on this remarkable debut as to why she is one of the most exciting, distinctive and bold young musical talents on the rise today. A native of Brooklyn, she began singing at age 12 and fell under the spell of Sarah Vaughan. Wade attended LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts and earned her music degree from Manhattan School of Music. One of four artists selected for the Dianne Reeves Young Artist workshop at Carnegie Hall, she was first runner-up at the 2006 New York City Jazzmobile Vocal Competition. The entire jazz industry has passionately embraced Wade including Wynton Marsalis, who features her regularly at Jazz at Lincoln Center; Christian McBride, who mentored her at his Jazz Aspen Academy; and Rufus Reid, who selected her for his Grammy®-nominated album, *Quiet Pride: The Elizabeth Catlett Project*. Wade has performed with Bobby Sanabria, Aaron Diehl, Oran Etkin, Robert Glasper and MacArthur Fellow and choreographer, Kyle Abraham as well as at venues and festivals worldwide including Montreux and Spoleto.

A singer, composer, arranger and educator, Wade is a professor at the Aaron Copland School at Queens College and teaches for Jazzmobile. Following the Monk competition in 2010, she self-released *Love Walked In*, which earned her the NPR *Song Travels* feature. With *Offering*, Wade continues walking in love and using her art to raise our consciousness.

### **Brianna Thomas** (Vocals)

Born and raised in Illinois, Brianna Thomas grew up surrounded by music. Thomas' father, Charlie Thomas, influenced her with his own unique talents as a vocalist and percussionist. At age six, she made her singing debut with her father's band, performing a duet rendition of the jazz classic, "What A Wonderful World". Just shy of her teens, Thomas was noticed by local jazz musician John Hardesty, who gave special attention to point out her talents to distinguished jazz educator Mary Jo Papich (former President of IAJE and the Jazz Education Network). Soon after their meeting, Thomas toured Europe with the Peoria Jazz All-Stars, a big band under Papich's direction. Thomas' talents and dedication propelled her to many successes including performances at the Montreux, North Sea and Umbria Jazz Festivals as well as venues ranging from the Bahamas to Geneva, Switzerland.

From 2001-2002, Thomas was a resident at the Betty Carter Jazz Ahead Program, an international artist-in-residence program that assembles a select group of jazz musicians to perform their original compositions at the Kennedy Center. At Jazz Ahead, she worked with a host of premier jazz educators and performers including vocalist Carmen Lundy, drummer Winard Harper, saxophonist Nathan Davis and trumpeter Jimmy Owens. In 2005, Thomas moved to Tennessee where she regularly performed with many of Nashville's finest including the Barber Brothers.

In 2006, Thomas had her New York City debut performance at the Women in Jazz Festival held at Dizzy's Club at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and also made a guest appearance at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In 2007, she decided to attend The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, where she met and studied voice with Richard Harper and

Kenneth Kamal Scott. In New York, Thomas connected with pianist and swing band leader, Gordon Webster, with whom she soon became a featured vocalist. Thomas has also had the honor to perform with legendary musicians including Clark Terry, Wycliffe Gordon, Victor Goines, Junior Mance, Charles Tolliver, Reggie Workman, Frank Wess, Paul West, Rene Marie, Fred Anderson, Von Freeman, Jimmy Owens, Norman Simmons, Art Barron, Winard Harper and Houston Person. In 2009, she was voted "Best of the Best" among New York's vocalists, as the winner of New York's Jazzmobile Vocal Competition, judged by jazz legends such as pianist and educator Billy Taylor, Grady Tate and Gloria Lynn. In May 2011, Thomas graduated from the New School For Jazz and Contemporary Music with a Bachelor of fine arts degree. As for Brianna Thomas' future, the best illustration is given in the words of legendary trombonist Curtis Fuller: "a marvelous new artist who has all it takes to reach the top of the jazz profession and music in general."