

## Annenberg Center Celebrates the Great Women of Blues & Jazz

*by Winnie McCroy  
EDGE Editor  
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A musical tribute to Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and other female pioneers of jazz will bring together New York's best vocalists and musicians to "Celebrate The Great Women Of Blues & Jazz," on Saturday, March 12 at Annenberg Center Live, as part of the African Roots, American Voices series.

Directed by Toshi Reagon and Allison Miller, "Celebrate The Great Women Of Blues & Jazz" honors the musical mothers of these performers in an evening of beloved jazz standards and blues hits which celebrate the women whose immense talent and unbreakable spirit shaped the future of jazz and blues. Reagon and Miller will be joined by a cast of stunning vocalists and musicians as well as internationally renowned tap dancer/choreographer, Michelle Dorrance.

"I created this show thinking about the audience at the Schomburg," said Reagon, recalling how it was first performed at The Schomburg Women In Jazz Festival in 2012. "Whenever I was in the audience watching a show, I would be blessed to sit next to some serious music lovers and historians. They would tell me about seeing Billie, Ella, Sarah -- all the ladies we know by one name because they were so powerful. I wanted to do something to not only honor those artists, but show respect and honor those folks that helped nurture their careers and in turn gave birth to mine."

Annenberg Center Live favorite Reagon has been described as "a talented, versatile singer, songwriter and musician with a profound ear for sonic Americana -- from folk to funk, from blues to rock" by critic/blogger Eva Yaa Asantewaa (InfiniteBody), who writes, "She masters each of these genres with vocal strategies that easily spiral and swoop from the expressively sinuous to the hard-charging, a combination of warmth and mischief."

While her expansive career has landed her comfortably in residence at Carnegie Hall, the Paris Opera House and Madison Square Garden, you can just as easily find Reagon turning up at a music festival, intimate venue or local club. Reagon is home on any musical stage and has had the pleasure of working with Lenny Kravitz, Lizz Wright, Ani DiFranco, Carl Hancock Rux, Nona Hendryx, Pete Seeger, Chocolate Genius and many other amazing artists, including her favorite collaborator, her mom, Bernice Johnson Reagon.

There will be a pre-show talk at 7 p.m. about the influence of women in blues and jazz featuring creator/director/performer Toshi Reagon and members of the cast. The talk will be moderated by the University of Pennsylvania's Salamishah Tillet, Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies.



(Source: Takako Harkness Photography)

The full cast includes Music Directors Toshi Reagon (Vocals, Guitar), Allison Miller (Drums); Host Liza Jessie Peterson; Vocalists Christelle Durandy, Karma Mayet Johnson, Tamar-kali, Josette Newsam Marchak, Mem Nhadri; Band members Mayra Casales (Percussion), Ingrid Jensen (Trumpet), Reut Regeve (Trombone), Linda Oh (Bass), Alex Nolan (Guitar), Rachel Eckroth (Piano); and dancer Michelle Dorrance.

The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Center has been the region's leading multi-disciplinary performance venue for theatre, dance, jazz, world music, new music and children's programming since its inception in 1971. The Annenberg Center's curatorial vision emphasizes four primary values: artistic integrity, cultural diversity, curatorial balance and a willingness to take risks. By presenting world-renowned and cutting edge artists and companies that express adventuresome perspectives on contemporary issues, timeless ideas and diverse cultures, the Annenberg Center promotes critical thinking and dialogue among its audiences, creating a uniquely rewarding arts experience.

The Annenberg Center has achieved national recognition for its outstanding Dance Celebration series (previously presented in partnership with Philadelphia's Dance Affiliates), touring theatre series, and for its superior offerings for children, including both its Arts4Youth Series and the acclaimed 30 plus year Philadelphia International Children's Festival, the oldest festival of its kind in the United States.

"Celebrate The Great Women Of Blues & Jazz" will be held at 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 12 at Annenberg Center Live, 3680 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104. Tickets \$30-75.

*For tickets and more information, call 215-898-3900 or visit [AnnenbergCenter.org](http://AnnenbergCenter.org)*



(Source: Takako Harkness Photography)

## **SCHEDULE:**

### **HIROMI**

The Trio Project

Friday, April 1 @ 8 p.m.

Tickets \$20-50

### **CHERISH THE LADIES & FRIENDS**

The Easter Rising of 1916

Saturday, April 2 @ 8 p.m.

Tickets \$20-50

### **THE JOHNNY CLEGG BAND**

Sunday, April 3 @ 7 p.m.

Tickets \$20-50

\*African Roots, American Voices Event

### **DR. LONNIE SMITH**

Saturday, April 9 @ 8 p.m.

Tickets \$20-50

\*African Roots, American Voices Event

### **LISA FISCHER & GRAND BATON**

Saturday, April 23 @ 8 p.m.

Tickets \$30-75

\*African Roots, American Voices Event

### **JUAN DE MARCOS & THE AFRO-CUBAN ALL STARS**

Saturday, May 7 @ 8 p.m.

Tickets \$20-50

\*African Roots, American Voices Event