

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New York City Center announces future Encores! production ushering in a new tradition celebrating iconic American musicals:

***Into the Woods*, Directed by Encores! Artistic Director Lear deBessonet**

Encores! Inside the Revival | *The Life* episode released today featuring Mykal Kilgore, Ledisi, and Director and Adapter Billy Porter

New York, NY/November 18, 2020 – New York City Center today announced an additional musical in development as part of the longstanding Encores! series. Led by Encores! Artistic Director **Lear deBessonet**, Encores! Music Director **Rob Berman**, and Encores! Creative Producing Director **Clint Ramos**, the future of the popular Tony-honored series will include varied expressions of musical theater revivals: hidden gems from the Broadway canon, productions where artists reclaim work through their own personal lens, and celebrations that look at the ways classic musicals connect us. **Stephen Sondheim** and **James Lapine**'s ***Into the Woods*** will be the first production of this third tenet and usher in a new tradition at City Center celebrating iconic American musicals.

An Annual Celebration of Iconic American Musicals

Mayor La Guardia founded New York City Center in 1943 for the people of New York to experience the best of music, theater, and dance. The Encores! experience—combining the sublime Encores! Orchestra with exquisite Broadway talent—is unique to City Center and creates an occasion within this founding mission to be a place for all New Yorkers—a space of unity and opportunity.



Encores! Artistic Director **Lear deBessonnet** said, “If the reason to revive a hidden gem is to discover it, then the reason to revive a beloved musical that holds enormous meaning to so many people is to discover what we have in common, and how our experience with these shows connects us. One of the things I find remarkable about musical theater is the space it holds in America—against all odds, providing a touchpoint of commonality. Among its many rich layers, *Into the Woods* is a fable about how humans pursue their wishes, and what happens when they set aside their individual wishes to create a greater community wish.”

For these future Encores! productions of iconic American musicals, the New York theater community will wrap its arms around a multi-generational group of theater lovers who have experience with their own production to celebrate the fact that these musicals are something we have in common.

Encores! Inside the Revival

Streamed for free on City Center’s website and YouTube channel, the new digital series **Encores! Inside the Revival** explores the future Encores! productions (*The Life*, *The Tap Dance Kid*, and *Into the Woods*) and cancelled shows from the spring 2020 season—providing a look inside the creative process of these revivals.

The first installment of the series released today features Emmy and Tony Award-winning artist **Billy Porter** (FX’s *Pose*) who takes audiences through his reimagining of the 1997 Tony-nominated musical, *The Life*. Punctuated with performances by recording artist and Encores! Off-Center alum **Mykal Kilgore** (“Use What You Got”) and Grammy-nominated artist **Ledisi** (“The Oldest Profession”), Encores! Producing Creative Director Clint Ramos and Porter discuss his vision as the production’s director and adapter for an updated take on the story of Queen, a prostitute, and her fellow sex workers, who strive for a better life against all oppressive forces in Times Square in 1980. By re-envisioning the main character of Queen, Porter transforms and evolves the story of *The Life* into one of hope and survival, honoring the characters’ given circumstances, and revealing their universal humanity. *The Life* features music by **Cy Coleman**, lyrics by **Ira Gasman**, and book by Cy Coleman, Ira Gasman, and **David Newman**.

In the following episode to be released **December 16**, Tony Award-winning director **Kenny Leon** (*A Raisin in the Sun*) dives into the 1983 Tony-nominated musical *The Tap Dance Kid*, centered around the life of an upper-middle class Black family and a ten-year-old’s dream of being a professional tap dancer despite the challenges posed by his lawyer father and society. Leon, alongside book adapter **Lydia Diamond**, will give audiences an up-



close look at the percussive heart of the story with the help of choreographer **Jared Grimes** and cast member from the original Broadway production **Dulé Hill**. *The Tap Dance Kid* features music by **Henry Krieger**, lyrics by **Robert Lorick**, book by **Charles Blackwell**, adapted by Lydia Diamond, based on the novel “Nobody’s Family is Going to Change” by Louise Fitzhugh.

All Encores! Inside the Revival episodes will be streamed for free on City Center’s YouTube page and website at NYCityCenter.org. Programming and casting subject to change. New York City Center is located at 131 West 55th Street between 6th and 7th Avenues. For information call 212.581.1212 or visit NYCityCenter.org.

Encores! artistic leadership includes Artistic Director Lear deBessonet, Music Director Rob Berman, and Producing Creative Director Clint Ramos. Josh Clayton is Encores! Assistant Music Director and Adrian Alea is Encores! Creative Associate. Encores! Creative Advisors are Camille A. Brown, Eisa Davis, and Robert O’Hara. Jenny Gersten is Producer of Musical Theater for New York City Center.

Major support for Encores! is provided by the Stacey and Eric Mindich Fund for Musical Theater. Additional major support is provided by the Ford Foundation, the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Jerome L. Greene Foundation, the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, and Lisa and Richard Witten. Encores! season sponsors include Roz and Jerry Meyer, The Shubert Foundation, the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for Encores! and the Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust. Additional support for Encores! is provided by the Marta Heflin Foundation, The Kaplen Brothers Fund, The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, The Frederick Loewe Foundation, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc., The SHS Foundation, Leo Shull Foundation for the Arts, The Ted Snowdon Foundation, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

NEW YORK CITY CENTER (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. The distinctive neo-Moorish theater welcomes over 300,000 annual visitors to experience internationally acclaimed artists on the same stage where legends like George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, Barbara Cook, José Ferrer, Martha Graham, and Paul Robeson made their mark. Its landmark 75th Anniversary Season (2018 – 2019) paid tribute to this rich history and celebrated the institution’s singular role in the arts today. City Center’s Tony-honored Encores! series has celebrated the tradition of American musical theater for over 25 years. In 2013, City Center launched the Encores! Off-Center series, which brings today’s innovative artists into contact with groundbreaking musicals from the more recent past. Dance has also been integral to the theater’s mission from the start and programs like the annual Fall for Dance Festival, with all tickets \$15, remain



central to City Center’s identity. Home to a roster of renowned national and international companies including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (City Center’s Principal Dance Company) and Manhattan Theatre Club, New York City Center is Manhattan’s first performing arts center, founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with the mission of making the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. That mission continues today through its dynamic programming, art exhibitions, studio events, and master classes, which are complemented by education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to over 11,000 New York City students, teachers, and families each year. NYCityCenter.org

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