

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pasadena Symphony Association
Pasadena Symphony & POPS
Contact: Marisa McCarthy
MMcCarthy@PasadenaSymphony-Pops.org
(626) 793-7172 ext. 13



June 7, 2023

For artist images and bios, visit: <https://pasadenasympphony-pops.org/divas-through-the-decades-press-release/>

MICHAEL FEINSTEIN AND THE PASADENA POPS OPEN THE SUMMER SEASON WITH A SPARKLING CELEBRATION OF DIVAS THROUGH THE DECADES

Pasadena, CA – Principal Pops Conductor **Michael Feinstein** kicks off the **Pasadena POPS 2023 Rusnak Summer Concert series on Saturday, June 24** with **Divas Through the Decades**. From songs made famous by **Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday and Nina Simone to Aretha Franklin, Natalie Cole, Whitney Houston** and beyond – the POPS celebrates powerful black women who shaped the American Songbook. Hear them roar with timeless hits ***Lady Be Good, Natural Woman, This Will Be, I Put a Spell on You, I'm Every Woman*** and more. Plus a special tribute to the legendary **Tina Turner** rounds out the program with ***Proud Mary*** and some surprises, all in symphonic sound by Pasadena's premiere orchestra.

Feinstein will welcome three divas in their own right to honor this legendary music. Award-winning Jazz songstress **Nicole Henry** returns to the POPS stage to channel Whitney Houston and Tina Turner, while the larger-than-life **Catherine Russell**, who earned a Grammy Award for her work on the soundtrack for the HBO series *Boardwalk Empire*, will light up the night sky for songs by Etta James and more. Motown diva **Freda Payne** will perform a special tribute to Ella Fitzgerald, topped off by her solid gold mega-hit ***Band of Gold***.

All concerts are held at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Gardens. Grounds open for picnicking and dining at 5:30pm and performances begin at 7:30pm. Don't miss the best outdoor dinner party in town with spacious circular table seating with fine linens, or lawn seating for those who want to bring a blanket – each option carries on the tradition of picnic-dining with your family and friends with Michael Feinstein and the San Gabriel Valley's premier orchestra! Among many venue amenities, concertgoers can enjoy pre-ordered gourmet box dinners for on-site pickup just steps from their table, two full-service beverage centers and a variety of food truck options.

The Arboretum is located at 301 North Baldwin Ave., Arcadia, CA. Subscribers may purchase pre-paid on-site parking at the Arboretum, and all concertgoers can purchase guaranteed and convenient parking at Santa Anita Park, with non-stop shuttle service to the Arboretum's main entrance.

Single tickets start at \$30. Season subscriptions and single tickets are now on sale, and are available by calling the box office at (626) 793-7172, online at PasadenaSymphony-Pops.org or at the Arboretum on concert days.

IF YOU GO:

- **What:** The Pasadena POPS presents Divas Through the Decades
Michael Feinstein, *Principal Pops Conductor*
Nicole Henry, Freda Payne & Catherine Russell, *soloists*
- **When:** Saturday, June 24, 2023. Concert starts at 7:30pm. Gates open at 5:30pm.
- **Where:** The LA County Arboretum | 301 N Baldwin Ave., Arcadia, CA 91007
- **Cost:** Tickets start at \$30.00
- **Dining:** Gates open at 5:30pm for picnicking. Guests are welcome to bring their own food and drink, pre-order boxed meals, or purchase from onsite food and beverage vendors.
- **Parking:** Subscribers have the opportunity to purchase onsite Arboretum parking. Single ticket holders may purchase guaranteed and convenient parking at Santa Anita Park Lot 6, located just across Baldwin Ave., with complimentary non-stop shuttle service to the Arboretum's main entrance. Lot 6 parking may be purchased in advanced at pasadenasympphony-pops.org or onsite (**cash only**) for \$15.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Michael Feinstein Principal Pops Conductor

In addition to his recognition as one of the leading musical entertainers and piano virtuosos of recent decades, Michael Feinstein's work as an educator, archivist, interpreter, and Ambassador of the Great American Songbook have established the popular and honored musician as a pre-eminent force in contemporary music. His dazzling career as a top-selling and critically acclaimed recording artist and a star performer on Broadway, and the world's great concert stages has earned him five Grammy Award nominations, two Emmy nominations of his PBS-TV specials and acclaim for his NPR series. His live concerts have spanned the globe including such iconic venues such as The White House, Buckingham Palace, Hollywood Bowl, Carnegie Hall, and the Sydney Opera House.

In 2022, Feinstein released to rave reviews, *Gershwin Country*, an album of standards in duet with some of the biggest names in Country Music from Dolly Parton and Alison Krauss to Brad Paisley and Amy Grant.

In 2007, as an extension of his work as a legendary performer and passionate guardian of his nation's greatest musical traditions, Mr. Feinstein founded the Great American Songbook Foundation. The Foundation works to preserve and elevate America's rich musical legacy by curating physical artifacts of its creators and performers; offering programs for the public and research opportunities for scholars, historians, and performers; and providing educational opportunities for student musicians, including the annual high school Songbook Academy®. For over a decade, Michael served as a Founding Member on the Library of Congress' National Recording Preservation Board; an organization dedicated to ensuring the survival, conservation and increased public availability of America's sound recording heritage.

Feinstein earned his fifth Grammy Award nomination in 2009 for *The Sinatra Project*, his CD celebrating the music of “Ol’ Blue Eyes.” *The Sinatra Project, Volume II: The Good Life* was released in 2011. He released the CDs *The Power Of Two* – collaborating with *Glee* and *30 Rock* star Cheyenne Jackson – and *Cheek To Cheek*, recorded with Broadway legend Barbara Cook. For Feinstein’s CD *We Dreamed These Days*, he co-wrote the title song with Dr. Maya Angelou.

His Emmy Award-nominated TV special *Michael Feinstein – The Sinatra Legacy*, which was taped live at the Palladium in Carmel, IN, aired across the country in 2011. The PBS series *Michael Feinstein’s American Songbook*, the recipient of the ASCAP Deems-Taylor Television Broadcast Award, was broadcast for three seasons and is available on DVD. His most recent primetime PBS-TV Special, *New Year’s Eve at The Rainbow Room* – written and directed by *Desperate Housewives* creator Marc Cherry – aired in 2014. For his nationally syndicated public radio program *Song Travels*, Michael interviewed and performed alongside of music luminaries such as Bette Midler, Neil Sedaka, Liza Minnelli, Rickie Lee Jones, David Hyde Pierce and more.

Feinstein was named Principal Pops Conductor for the Pasadena Symphony in 2012 and made his conducting debut in June 2013 to celebrated critical acclaim. Under Feinstein’s leadership, the Pasadena Pops has quickly become a premier orchestral presenter of the Great American Songbook with definitive performances of rare orchestrations and classic arrangements. He launched an additional Pops series at the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts in Palm Beach, Florida in 2014.

Michael’s book *The Gershwins and Me* – the *Los Angeles Times* best-seller from Simon & Schuster – features a new CD of Gershwin standards performed with Cyrus Chestnut at the piano.

Feinstein serves as Artistic Director of the Center for the Performing Arts, a \$170 million, three-theatre venue in Carmel, Indiana, which opened in January 2011. The theater is home to diverse live programming and a museum for his rare memorabilia and manuscripts. Since 1999, he has served as Artistic Director for Carnegie Hall’s “Standard Time with Michael Feinstein” in conjunction with ASCAP. In 2010 he became the director of the Jazz and Popular Song Series at New York’s Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Feinstein’s at the Nikko, Michael’s nightclub at San Francisco’s Nikko Hotel, has presented the top talents of pop and jazz since 2013. He debuted at Feinstein’s/54 Below, his new club in New York, late in 2015. His first venue in New York, Feinstein’s at the Regency, featured major entertainers such as Rosemary Clooney, Glen Campbell, Barbara Cook, Diahann Carroll, Jane Krakowski, Lea Michele, Cyndi Lauper, Jason Mraz, and Alan Cumming from 1999 to 2012. Most recently, Feinstein opened his first Los Angeles location, Feinstein’s at Vitello’s in June of 2019.

He has designed a new piano for Steinway called “The First Ladies,” inspired by the White House piano and signed by several former First Ladies. It was first played to commemorate the Ronald Regan centennial on February 6, 2011.

In 2013 Michael released *Change Of Heart: The Songs of Andre Previn* in collaboration with four time Oscar and eleven time Grammy Award-winning composer-conductor-pianist Andre Previn. The album celebrates Previn’s pop songs and motion picture classics. Earlier album highlights include *Hopeless Romantics*, a songbook of classics by Michael’s late friend Harry Warren, recording with legendary jazz pianist George Shearing. His album with songwriting icon Jimmy Webb, *Only One Life – The Songs of Jimmy Webb*, was named one of “10 Best CDs of the Year” by *USA Today*.

Feinstein received his fourth Grammy nomination for *Michael Feinstein with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra*, his first recording with a symphony orchestra. The year before, Rhino/Elektra Music released *The Michael Feinstein Anthology*, a two-disc compilation spanning 1987 to 1996 and featuring old favorites and previously unreleased tracks.

Michael was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, where he started playing piano by ear as a 5-year-old. After graduating from high school, he moved to Los Angeles when he was 20. The widow of legendary concert pianist-actor Oscar Levant introduced him to Ira Gershwin in July 1977. Feinstein became Gershwin's assistant for six years, which earned him access to numerous unpublished Gershwin songs, many of which he has since performed and recorded.

Gershwin's influence provided a solid base upon which Feinstein evolved into a captivating performer, composer, and arranger of his own original music. He also has become an unparalleled interpreter of music legends such as Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Johnny Mercer, Duke Ellington, and Harry Warren. Feinstein has received three honorary doctorates.

Through his live performances, recordings, film and television appearances, and his songwriting (in collaboration with Alan and Marilyn Bergman, Lindy Robbins, Bob Merrill, and Marshall Barer), Feinstein is an all-star force in American music.

For more information, please visit www.MichaelFeinstein.com.

Nicole Henry **Soloist**

Since her debut, Nicole Henry has established herself among the jazz world's most acclaimed performers, possessing a potent combination of dynamic vocal abilities, impeccable phrasing, and powerful emotional resonance.

Her passionate, soulful voice and heartfelt charisma have earned her a Soul Train Award for "Best Traditional Jazz Performance," and three Top-10 U.S. Billboard and HMV Japan jazz albums. Heralded by *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Japan Times*, *El Pais*, *Jazz Times*, *Essence* and more, Ms. Henry tells real stories through peerless interpretations of repertoire from the American Songbook, classic and contemporary jazz, popular standards, blues and originals.

She has captivated audiences in over 20 countries, headlining at venues in cities including New York, Tokyo, Madrid, Moscow, Paris, Shanghai, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco and Miami. Ms. Henry has also performed in more than 30 music festivals worldwide and in some of the world's most famous venues including Blue Note, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Blues Alley, Arsht Center, Feinstein's, Green Mill, Jazz St. Louis, Madrid Jazz Festival, the Regattabar, and Catalina Jazz.

She has recorded with some of today's musical greats including Kirk Whalum, Julian Lage, Gerald Clayton and Gil Goldstein and has performed with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra and Michael Feinstein.

In late 2019, Ms. Henry returned to the theatrical stage and garnered critical praise in the musical version of *The Bodyguard*, and in 2021 will be in the world premiere of the new musical *A Wonderful World*, on the life of Louis Armstrong.

Growing up in a musical family in Bucks County, PA, Ms. Henry immersed herself in the arts early on, singing in school and church, and studying cello and ballet. After graduating from the University of Miami with a degree in Communications and Theatre, she launched a successful acting career, appearing in national commercial roles as well as a series of voiceover assignments. However, she directed her strongest passion toward the development of her full-time singing career which was quickly rewarded when the *Miami New Times* named Nicole “Best Solo Musician”.

Through Nicole Henry’s career accomplishments and active commitment to supporting community non-profits such as Miami Children’s Initiative, YoungArts and Miami Music Project, she has been recognized by the City of Miami Beach and Miami-Dade County with proclamations of “Nicole Henry Days” in 2011, 2016 and 2017. She also served two terms on the Board of Governors of the Florida Chapter of the Recording Academy.

Freda Payne **Soloist**

Talented singer and actress Freda Payne was born on September 19 in Detroit. Freda modeled and took ballet and Afro-Cuban dance. While at Hutchins Middle School, she appeared on the nationally televised Ted Mack’s *The Original Amateur Hour*. Singing jingles, Payne was featured on WJR radio’s *Make Way for Youth* and many other local television and radio shows. Payne’s mother spurned a contract from, then unknown, Barry Gordy.

When she graduated from Central High School Freda Payne toured with Pearl Bailey’s musical review and sang with the Duke Ellington Band. Her first album was *After the Lights Go Down* for ABC’s Impulse Records in 1962.

Moving to New York City, Freda made appearances on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, *The Merv Griffin Show* and *The Dick Cavett Show*. In 1964, she joined the Four Tops, Billy Eckstine, and Nipsey Russell on the Quincy Jones Tour. Payne was understudy for Leslie Uggams in Broadway’s *Hallelujah Baby* and performed in the show 5 times.

Stardom for Payne began when she signed with Invictus Records, ran by her old Detroit friends, Brian Holland, Edward Holland, Jr. and Lamont Dozier (formerly of Motown) in 1969. Payne’s smash single *Band of Gold* in 1970 was ranked #1 in the U.K. and #3 in the U.S.A., her first gold record. Other hits included *Deeper and Deeper*, *You Brought Me Joy* and the anti-war, *Bring the Boys Home*. As her star kept rising, Payne appeared in television specials and toured Europe and Japan.

Although she left Invictus in 1973, to date she has recorded 21 albums including several remakes of “Band of Gold”. In 1974, she made the cover of *Jet* magazine after she was dubbed a “Dame of Malta”, by the Knights of Malta and the Sovereign Military and Hospital Order of St. John of Jerusalem by the Prince of Rumania. Payne hosted *Today’s Black Woman*, a talk show, in 1980 – 81 before joining the cast of Duke Ellington’s *Sophisticated Ladies* in 1982. She also starred in productions of *Ain’t Misbehavin’* with Della Reese, *The Blues in the Night*, *Jellies Last Jam* with Gregory Hines and Savion Glover into the

1990's. Payne film appearances include: *Private Obsession*, *Sprung*, *Ragdoll*, *The Nutty Professor II: The Klumps* and *Fire and Ice*.

On April 22, 2009 Freda appeared on American Idol and sang "Band Of Gold". In February 2010, Freda joined Kanye West, Jordan Sparks, Jennifer Hudson, Barbra Streisand and many more on We Are The World for Haiti Relief.

In 2011 Freda sang a duet with Cliff Richard called "Saving A Life" from his *Soulicious* album. She also toured England with Cliff in the fall of 2011.

Freda recorded a new Jazz based album for the Mack Ave label titled *Come Back To Me Love* produced by Bill Cunliffe.

In April 2018 Freda returned to the stage with glowing reviews in *Ella: First Lady of Song* at the Delaware Theatre Company in Wilmington, Delaware.

More recently, Freda released an EP of duets titled *Let There Be Love* featuring Freda singing with Johnny Mathis, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Kenny Lattimore and Kurt Elling. She has also been busy writing her memoir *Band of Gold A Memoir* Yorkshire Publishing (November 2, 2021) with Mark Bego. In May 2022 Freda released a new single titled "Just To Be With You". Freda Payne's prolific career will continue to flourish and prosper for as long as her creative juices keep flowing. Her indelible mark on the music industry is far from over.

Catherine Russell **Soloist**

Her 2006 debut album *Cat*, (World Village/Harmonia Mundi), garnered rave reviews, paving the way for her 2008 sophomore release, *Sentimental Streak*. Catherine 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. L'Académie du Jazz in France chose *Sentimental Streak* as finalist for Prix du Jazz Vocal. Catherine 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 I-Tunes jazz charts. A fourth album, *Strictly Romancin'* was released in February 2012. Catherine Russell won a Grammy Award as a featured artist on the soundtrack album for the HBO-TV series, *Boardwalk Empire*.

With universal acclaim, Catherine Russell has performed on three continents. She's been a hit at major Jazz Festivals including Monterey, Newport, North Sea, JazzAscona, Montreal, Bern, Rochester International, Tanglewood, and at sold out venues like The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Scullers in Boston, The Dakota in Minneapolis, Dizzy's Club in NYC, and Yoshi's in San Francisco. 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; 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.

ABOUT THE PASADENA SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION

Formed in 1928, the Pasadena Symphony and POPS is an ensemble of Hollywood's most talented, sought after musicians. With extensive credits in the film, television, recording and orchestral industry, the artists of Pasadena Symphony and POPS are the most heard in the world.

The Pasadena Symphony and POPS performs in two of the most extraordinary venues in the United States: Ambassador Auditorium, known as the Carnegie Hall of the West, and the luxuriant Los Angeles Arboretum & Botanic Garden. The multi-platinum-selling, two-time Emmy and five-time Grammy Award-nominated entertainer dubbed "The Ambassador of the Great American Songbook," Michael Feinstein, leads the POPS as Principal Pops Conductor, succeeding Marvin Hamlisch.

A hallmark of its robust education programs, the Pasadena Symphony Association has served the youth of the region for over five decades through the Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestras (PYSO) comprised of seven performing ensembles, with over 400 gifted 4th-12th grade students from all over Southern California. The PYSO Symphony has performed at venues across the globe as well as on the television show GLEE.

The PSA provides people from all walks of life with powerful access points to the world of symphonic music.

- end -