



Lisa Fischer & Grand Baton

Vocals **Lisa Fischer**
Musical director, arranger, guitar, SazBass and backing vocals **JC Maillard**
Drums and percussion **Thierry Arpino**
Bass and backing vocals **Aidan Carroll**

PROGRAM

There will be an intermission.



Saturday, April 23 @ 8 PM

Zellerbach Theatre

**AFRICAN ROOTS,
AMERICAN VOICES**

Part of the African Roots, American Voices series.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Lisa Fischer is stepping into the spotlight at last. After four decades of singing background for icons like The Rolling Stones, Tina Turner, Chaka Khan and Nine Inch Nails, Fischer is finally offering her own humble, heartfelt song, accompanied by her inventive new band Grand Baton. The past 18 months have been a whirlwind, with performances at the Newport and Monterey Jazz Festivals, at the Hollywood Bowl, and in major cities all over the world.

The unexpected success of the Oscar® Award-winning documentary *Twenty Feet from Stardom* (2013) altered the course of Fischer's musical journey. The film told her story, complete with clips of her 1991 Grammy® Award-winning R&B hit "How Can I Ease The Pain," live footage of her legendary duets with Mick Jagger on "Gimme Shelter" and glowing testimonials from famous colleagues like Sting, Patti Austin and Chris Botti. It showcased her virtuosity and vulnerability, opened a window on her sometimes lonely life on the road, earned her a second Grammy® Award and left audiences eager to see and hear more.

Fischer set out on her first tour with no recordings or video to help book and promote shows, headlining first in small clubs, moving quickly to festivals and concert halls. Journalists, music business insiders and supporters jumped in to spread the word, including *The New York Times*: "She brought down the house in the single best show I've seen in the many years I've visited Birdland."

Fischer has found ideal co-conspirators in Grand Baton. The band's organic fusion of African, Middle Eastern and Caribbean rhythms, psychedelic soul and progressive rock awakens and ignites her flexibility and freedom of expression. "Collectively they bring amazing musicianship, hearts and souls and most importantly a sense of playfulness," she says. "It's a dream to be sonically surrounded with this kind of sensitivity and care." The band has helped her realize her lifelong desire to make music that heals but still rocks the house. In performance, she draws from an eclectic palette of influences, whether putting her stamp on Led Zeppelin and Little Willie John or recasting rock anthems from her tours with the Stones and Tina Turner.

While Fischer's range is legendary, her greatest gift is the ability to connect, to reach the hearts of her listeners. Raised in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn, Fischer emerged from New York's fervent studio scene in the early 1980s and quickly became session singer royalty. She paid her dues as a member of the Marvelettes before legendary vocalist Luther Vandross invited her to sing background with his touring band. He became her mentor and friend, nurturing her talent over a 20-year period until his untimely passing in 2005. During Fischer's two decades working with Vandross, her voice also powered albums by a constellation of music legends including Aretha Franklin, Bobby McFerrin, George Benson, Diana Ross, Laurie Anderson, Teddy Pendergrass, Dionne Warwick, Grover Washington, Jr., Billy Ocean, Melba Moore, Al Jarreau and Patti LaBelle.

Fischer joined The Rolling Stones on tour for the first time for their 1989 Steel Wheels tour; she has graced their stage for 26 years. When the spotlight catches Fischer singing with Mick Jagger she is a quintessential rock-and-roll goddess, soaring above the band's earthy groove. "It's always a high point in the show for me," says Jagger. Keith Richards commends her "amazing power, energy, and projection."

In 1991, in the midst of touring with both the Stones and Luther Vandross, Fischer recorded a solo album, *So Intense*, for Elektra Records. "I used members of my session singing community on the CD, so I felt surrounded by love," she says. "The most difficult thing was finding the right music. It was also the most exciting thing." The album featured her songwriting collaborations with producer Narada Michael Walden on both the Top 10 R&B

hit "Save Me" and the number one and Grammy® Award-winning R&B single "How Can I Ease the Pain." Fischer also won the Grammy® Award for "Best R&B Vocal Performance, Female," an honor she shared with Patti LaBelle, whose award-winning project *Burnin'* also featured Fischer on background vocals.

Though she continued to record for soundtracks and various studio projects, Fischer's career revolved around supporting other artists. Then, in 2011, the late Gil Friesen and director Morgan Neville approached Fischer when he began interviewing singers for *Twenty Feet from Stardom*, a feature-length documentary celebrating the contributions of background vocalists. Alongside vocal trailblazers like Darlene Love and Merry Clayton, Fischer candidly discussed the delicate balance between life and career, success and challenges, as well as the nuance of singing with other vocalists. "Ms. Fischer has become the unexpected star of Mr. Neville's film," wrote *The New York Times*. "She's the empress of that world," music legend Patti Austin declared in the film. "That's a powerhouse voice. I think of her as a star," said Sting. Between her down-to-earth persona in interview footage, her vocal mastery in archival clips and her multi-tracked performance of Samuel Barber's "Sure on This Shining Night," Fischer moved viewers with her voice, her soft-spoken charm and her thought-provoking insights. "This movie is going to make Lisa Fischer a star," said music industry pundit Bob Lefsetz. "And she deserves it, because she's just that damn good."

Whether fronting her own band or supporting other artists, Fischer's passion for music in all its forms leads her to constant growth and experimentation with different styles. She recorded the title track for Billy Childs' all-star tribute to Laura Nyro, *Map to the Treasure* (2014), collaborated with YoYo Ma and Gregory Porter and co-created music with J.C. Maillard for the Alonzo King LINES Ballet. "It's an exciting new chapter for an artist who had early career success but eschewed the trappings of celebrity in favor of the satisfaction of making honest music every night," *Broadway World* observes. With spiritual truth-telling as her compass and loving kindness as her guide, Fischer is on a creative journey, destination unknown. "Inspiration is all around," she said in a recent interview with New York's *Daily News*. "My heart is wide open and I'm in love with the thought of singing to anyone who wishes to listen."