



AOIFE O'DONOVAN

SPECIAL GUEST YASMIN WILLIAMS

Sunday, December 10 @ 7 PM

Zellerbach Theatre

There will be an intermission.



Co-presented with World Cafe Live.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Aoife O'Donovan

Grammy® Award-winning artist O'Donovan operates in a thrilling musical world beyond genre. Deemed "a vocalist of unerring instinct" by *The New York Times*, she has released three critically acclaimed and boundary-blurring solo albums including her most recent record, 2022's boldly orchestrated and literarily crafted *Age of Apathy*. Recorded and written over the course of the winter and spring of 2021 with acclaimed producer Joe Henry, *Age of Apathy* is "stunning" (*Rolling Stone*) and "taps into the propulsion of prime Joni Mitchell" (*Pitchfork*).

Age of Apathy received three nominations at the 2023 Grammy® Awards including one for Best Folk Album. Folk Alliance International named the song "B61" its 2022 Song of the Year. O'Donovan continues to enchant audiences worldwide with her soul-stirring music and unwavering passion for storytelling through song. A savvy and generous collaborator, O'Donovan is one third of the group I'm With Her, with bandmates Sara Watkins and Sarah Jarosz. The trio's debut album, *See You Around*, was hailed as "willfully open-hearted" by NPR Music. I'm With Her earned an Americana Music Association Award in 2019 for Duo/Group of the Year and a Grammy® Award in 2020 for Best American Roots Song.

O'Donovan spent the preceding decade as co-founder and front woman of the string band, Crooked Still, and is the featured vocalist on *The Goat Rodeo Sessions* with Yo-Yo Ma, Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer and Chris Thile. She has appeared as a featured vocalist with over a dozen symphonies including the National Symphony Orchestra, written for Alison Krauss, performed with jazz trumpeter Dave Douglas and spent a decade as a regular contributor to the radio variety shows "Live From Here" and "A Prairie Home Companion."

Yasmin Williams

Williams sits on her leather couch, her guitar stretched across her lap horizontally with its strings turned to the sky. She taps on the fretboard with her left hand as her right hand plucks a kalimba placed on the guitar's body. Her feet, clad in tap shoes, keep rhythm on a mic'd wooden board placed under her. Even with all limbs in play, it's mind boggling that the melodic and percussive sounds that emerge are made by just one musician, playing in real time. With her ambidextrous and pedidextrous multi-instrumental techniques of her own making and influences ranging from video games to West African griots subverting the predominantly white male canon of fingerstyle guitar, Williams is truly a guitarist for the new century. So too is her stunning sophomore release, *Urban Driftwood*, an album for and of these times. Though the record is instrumental, its songs follow a narrative arc of 2020, illustrating both a personal journey and a national reckoning, through Williams' evocative, lyrical compositions.

A native of northern Virginia, Williams began playing electric guitar in eighth grade, after she beat the video game *Guitar Hero 2* on expert level. Initially inspired by Jimi Hendrix and other shredders she was familiar with through the game, she quickly moved on to acoustic guitar, finding that it allowed her to combine fingerstyle techniques with the lap-tapping she had developed through *Guitar Hero*, as well as perform as a solo artist. By tenth grade, she had released an EP of songs of her own composition. Deriving no lineage from "American primitive" and rejecting the problematic connotations of the term, Williams' influences include the smooth jazz and R&B she listened to growing up, Hendrix and Nirvana, go-go and hip-hop. Her love for the band Earth, Wind & Fire prompted her to incorporate the kalimba into her songwriting, and more recently, she's drawn inspiration from other Black women guitarists such as Elizabeth Cotten, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Algia Mae Hinton. On *Urban Driftwood*, Williams references the music of West African griots through the inclusion of kora (which she recently learned) and by featuring the hand drumming of 150th generation djeli of the Kouyate family, Amadou Kouyate, on the title track.

Since its release in January 2021, *Urban Driftwood* has been praised by numerous publications such as Pitchfork, *Rolling Stone*, *The Washington Post*, NPR Music, *No Depression*, Paste Magazine and many others.