

19/20 SEASON

Wallis Annenberg
Center for the
Performing Arts

Press Release

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**Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Presents
A Fig Street Films Production of
LEDISI: The Legend of Little Girl Blue
A Musical Journey into the Lives of Nina Simone and Ledisi**

**Classical, Jazz and Rhythm & Blues Sounds Mix with Riveting Storytelling
in Production Created by and Starring Ledisi with All-Star Team of Gregg Field, Director;
Ron Young, Writer; Kim Burse, Creative Music Supervisor; Brandon Waddles,
Musical Director; and Suzi Dietz and Billy Porter, Producers**

**8 Performances Added Due to Overwhelming Popular Demand!
Friday, December 13 through Sunday, December 29, 2019**

(Beverly Hills, CA, November 20, 2019) The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts presents the Fig Street Films production of *LEDISI: The Legend of Little Girl Blue*, a musical journey into the lives of Nina Simone and Ledisi, from Friday, December 13 through Sunday, December 29, 2019, in The Wallis' Lovelace Studio Theater. Eight performances have just been added to the engagement, due to the original dates being sold out months in advance. Created by and starring Ledisi, the 12-time Grammy®-nominated vocal powerhouse, *The Legend of Little Girl Blue* is directed by eight-time Grammy® winner Gregg Field (*Ella 100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella Fitzgerald*; *A Hot Time in Harlem – 70 Years at the Apollo Theatre*; *The Kennedy Center Honors*; *The Grammy Hall of Fame Awards*; *Frank Sinatra, A Man and His Music*) and written by Ledisi Young and Ron Young; creative music supervisor Kim Burse (Beyonce, Jennifer Lopez, Tina Turner); musical director Brandon Waddles; and produced by five-time Tony Award nominee Suzi Dietz and Tony and Grammy Award-winning actor/singer/director/composer/playwright Billy Porter (*Kinky Boots*, "Pose"). This beautifully orchestrated production mixes classical, jazz, and rhythm & blues sounds with riveting storytelling of the musical bond between Ledisi, an artist from the present, influenced by Simone, a legend from the past. In a nightclub-style setting, Ledisi portrays

herself, her mother and Simone as she returns to her roots in jazz, performing her classics reimagined with strings and big band horns in honor of one of her greatest inspirations.

"Nina Simone's legacy lifted me and reminded me to be proud of my skin and embrace the walk I was given," says Ledisi. "Her music lets me know I am not alone in my journey."

"We are proud to present this theatrical evening," says The Wallis' Artistic Director Paul Crewes, "and appreciate the opportunity to work with Ledisi, Gregg Field, Ron Young, Kim Burse, Brandon Waddles, Suzi Dietz and Billy Porter, all of whom bring their exceptional artistry to our stage."

Tickets, \$75, \$60 and \$30 (prices subject to change), are available at The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, located at [9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills](#). To purchase tickets and for more information, please call 310-746-4000 or visit [TheWallis.org/Nina](#).

About the Artists:

LEDISI (Performer/Creator/Writer) is a twelve-time Grammy nominated powerhouse vocalist with a career spanning almost two decades. Since arriving on the scene in the late 1990s, she's garnered three Soul Train Music awards, an NAACP Theater Award and 6 NAACP Image Award nominations. Born in New Orleans, Ledisi has wowed fans with her unparalleled vocals ever since she burst onto the scene in the Bay Area, where she was raised, earning a place in the pantheon of the greatest singers of her generation. A favorite of the Obamas and a long list of icons, including the late-Prince, Patti LaBelle, Smokey Robinson, Stevie Wonder, Chaka Khan and so many more, she has headlined two nationally sold-out tours, performed alongside Dave Matthews, Kelly Clarkson, Vince Gill and Maxwell, as well as jazz greats Herbie Hancock and Patti Austin. She recently recorded a duet on a posthumous project with late Miles Davis. No stranger to the theatre/film and television world, Ledisi landed her first feature, singing in the George Clooney directed film *Leatherheads*. In 2015 she landed a role in the Oscar-nominated movie, *Selma*, portraying the great Mahalia Jackson, and had a notable performance in Gabourney Sidibe's Shatterbox Anthology film, *The Tale of Four*. In the fall 2019, Ledisi secured her first major television role, playing the legendary Patti LaBelle on the hit BET series "American Soul." Ledisi has been on the theater scene for many years starting as a *Radio and Washing Machine* understudy on Broadway, appearing in Tony Kushner's *Caroline or Change* directed by George C. Wolfe. She helped workshop the Tony Award winning musical, *The Color Purple*, and was offered a role but decided to focus on her recording career instead, signing a deal with Universal Music Group. Ledisi returned to theatre as The Ancestor in the critically acclaimed off-Broadway musical at The Wallis, *Witness Uganda*, by Griffin Matthews and Matt Gould, a role for which she received the LA Stage Alliance Ovation Award nomination for Best Featured Actress in a Musical. Ledisi is also an author, releasing her first book *Better Than Alright: Finding Peace, Love and Power*, a collaboration with Essence Magazine. Her latest book, *The Walk Revised: Accepting Your Life as It Is Now* will be released in 2019 through her own Chinweya Publishing Company. Utilizing and developing her versatile skills as a writer, playwright, film producer, and now CEO of her record label Listen Back Entertainment, Ledisi will be launching several exciting projects in the near future, realizing her limitless potential as a creative and businesswoman.

GREGG FIELD (Director) Eight-time Grammy and 2018 Emmy winner, Latin Grammy "Producer of the Year" Gregg Field is one of the most musically diverse and highly sought-after producers, musicians and educators in music. World-class musicians and singers alike, a veritable who's who of the music world, including Placido Domingo, Michael Buble, Pharrell Williams, Barbara Streisand, Alejandro Sanz, Stevie Wonder, Frank Sinatra and Quincy Jones, are among his many musical collaborators. At age 24, Field toured with Count Basie as his drummer from 1980 through 1982, Ella Fitzgerald from 1985 through 1986 and Frank Sinatra from 1991 through 1995. He can be heard on Sinatra's historic, multi-platinum Duets and Duets II recordings. He has performed with major symphonies worldwide including London, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Nashville, Pittsburgh and the National Symphony in Washington D.C. and has been invited by Presidents Obama and Bush to perform at the White House. Recently Field received the Emmy win for "Outstanding Music Direction" for the PBS "Library of Congress Gershwin Prize" honoring Tony Bennett. Field also produced the historic Apollo Theater's "Ella 100: Live From the Apollo" birthday celebration of Ella Fitzgerald and the Apollo's 2018 Nina Simone tribute *Nina & Me* featuring Ledisi. In 2017 Field received a Grammy for producing the "Bluegrass Album of the Year" and Billboard #1 album *Coming Home* with violin virtuoso Mark O'Connor. Among his recent recordings are the 2019 Grammy

nominated albums *Standards* by Seal and *All About That Basie* by the Count Basie Orchestra. Field also produced Arturo Sandoval's iconic *Ultimate Duets* with Pharrell, Ariana Grande, Stevie Wonder and Placido Domingo among others. In 2013 Field received five Latin Grammy nominations including nods for "Album of the Year" and "Producer of the Year," winning three Latin Grammys including "Best Engineered Album." In 2010, Field was awarded the coveted "Producer of the Year" Latin Grammy. Field is also an author and Vanity Fair magazine contributor. Currently he serves as Chairman of the Board of Councilors at the USC-Thornton School of Music and is a board member of the University of Miami-Frost School of Music. The Bay Area native lives in Los Angeles and is married to singer Monica Mancini.

RON YOUNG (Writer), a native of Philadelphia, is an accomplished director, photographer and actor. After relocating to the Los Angeles area in 2006, making his impact in Hollywood ranging from music videos to photographing some of the industry's elite. His credits include the American Music Awards, The Grammys, E! Live From the Red Carpet, Dr. Oz, The Doctors, TD Jakes Show and David Tuter's Celebrations. Young is also the producer at Fig Street Films, which he founded with his wife Ledisi.

About the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts:

The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is a dynamic cultural hub and community resource where local, national and international artists share their artistry with ever-expanding audiences. The campus, located in the heart of Beverly Hills, CA, is committed to robust and distinctive presentations and education programs curated with both creativity and social impact in mind. Distinguished by its eclectic programming that mirrors the diverse landscape of Los Angeles and its location in the entertainment capital of the world, The Wallis has produced and presented more than 275 dance, theater, opera, classical music, cinema and family programs since its doors opened in October 2013. Hailed as "au courant" (*LaLa Magazine*), The Wallis was lauded by *Culture Vulture*, which proclaims, "If you love expecting the unexpected in the performing arts, you have to love The Wallis." Its programming has been nominated for 48 Ovation Awards and seven L.A. Drama Critic's Circle Awards. The campus itself, a breathtaking 70,000-square-foot facility, celebrating the classic and the modern, has garnered six architectural awards. Designed by acclaimed architect Zoltan E. Pali (SPF:architects), the restored building features the original 1933 Beverly Hills Post Office (on the National Register of Historic Places), which serves as the theater's dramatic yet welcoming lobby, and includes the contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the-art Bram Goldsmith Theater; the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater; an inviting open-air plaza for family, community and other performances; and GRoW @ The Wallis: A Space for Arts Education, where learning opportunities for all ages and backgrounds abound. Together, these elements embrace the city's history and its future, creating a performing arts destination for L.A.-area visitors and residents alike. The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is led by Chairman of the Board Michael Nemeroff, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer Rachel Fine and Artistic Director Paul Crewes.

For more information about The Wallis, please visit: TheWallis.org.
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EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

WHAT:

Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Presents
A Fig Street Films Production of

LEDISI: The Legend of Little Girl Blue

A Musical Journey into the Lives of Nina Simone and Ledisi

Created & Performed by Ledisi

Directed by Gregg Field

Written by Ledisi Young and Ron Young

Creative Music Supervisor Kim Burse

Musical Conductor Brandon Waddles

Produced by Suzi Dietz & Billy Porter

WHEN:

Friday, December 13 through Sunday, December 29, 2019

Evenings 8 pm (Sunday evenings at 7:30 pm; no performance Sunday evening, Dec. 22);
Weekend Matinees 2:30 pm; Friday Matinee (12/27) 2:30 pm

RUN TIME:

Running time is approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes, including a 15-minute intermission

WHERE:

Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
Lovelace Studio Theater
9390 N. Santa Monica Boulevard
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

TICKET PRICES AND INFORMATION:

\$75, \$60 & \$30 (prices subject to change)

TheWallis.org/Nina

310.746.4000

Box Office – Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Ticket Services
9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA, 90210

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