# **19/20 SEASON**

Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

# Press Release

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# Cast Announced for The Wallis & For The Record's Production of *LOVE ACTUALLY LIVE* The Record-Breaking, First-Of-Its-Kind, Theatrical Cinematic Experience, Returns this Holiday Season to the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

November 27 – December 29, 2019 Tickets to the Immersive Holiday Spectacle Now on Sale

(Beverly Hills, CA, November 14, 2019) – Casting has been announced for The Wallis and For The Record's production of *LOVE ACTUALLY LIVE*, the multimedia concert celebration of one of the most beloved holiday films of all time and the biggest, record-breaking hit in The Wallis' history, which is back by popular demand, now as a not-to-be-missed Los Angeles tradition with performances beginning the day before Thanksgiving (November 27) and running through the weekend following Christmas (December 29). Returning from the 2018 production are Rex Smith (RIAA Gold® recording artist), Carrie Manolakos (Broadway's *Mamma Mia!*, *Wicked*), Doug Kreeger (Broadway's *Les Misérables*), Tomasina

Abate (For The Record's *Scorsese: American Crime Requiem, Tarantino*), Carson Higgins (international tour of Green Day's *American Idiot*) and the multi-dimensional Emily Lopez. New this year to the lineup of outstanding performers are Rogelio Douglas Jr. (*In the Heights* and *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway), Declan Bennett (*Once, Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Taboo* in the West End, *American Idiot* and *Rent* on Broadway), Jon Robert Hall (Fox's *Grease: Live,* "Glee"), Chris Mann (NBC's "The Voice," *The Phantom of the Opera* 25th Anniversary Tour), James Byous (*Scorsese: American Crime Requiem*, Netflix's "Westside"), Ruby Lewis (Cirque du Soleil's *Paramour, Lights Out: Nat 'King' Cole*), singer/songwriter/actress Aubrie Sellers (one of *Rolling Stone*'s best country albums of the year), Gabriela Francesca Carrillo (*American Mariachi*, Netflix's *Homecoming*), Levi Smith (*A Bronx Tale: The Musical, It's a Wonderful Life, Mary Poppins* and *The Music Man* on Broadway), young singer/actress Nayah Damasen, John Battagliese and accomplished violinist Molly Rogers.

During its World Premiere last December, more than 12,000 people flocked to the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts to see this exceptional staging. *LOVE ACTUALLY LIVE* uniquely brings together friends and family alike to experience the unforgettable holiday classic in a three-dimensional world where the film and live action seamlessly intertwine throughout the London setting. Iconic scenes displayed on screens that travel throughout the set, share the stage with an all-star cast of singers and 15-piece orchestra as they reimagine the film's hit soundtrack including "Christmas is All Around," "Trouble With Love," and "Both Sides Now."

"We knew we made a very special production the moment the curtain rose on *Love Actually Live* last season," said The Wallis' Artistic Director Paul Crewes. "So I'm really pleased that we can collaborate again with our For The Record family this holiday season and share this very unique experience with Los Angeles audiences once again."

"The audiences response last year surpassed our expectations, with people unfailingly leaving the theatre after each performance crying, laughing, hugging, humming the soundtrack, and embracing the holiday spirit," said For The Record Live executive producer Shane Scheel. "As Angelenos look to make and carry forward new holiday traditions, we are honored to bring this holiday classic to life for a second year in a row."

"The superbly mounted musical," said the *Los Angeles Times*, is a co-production from the team behind Los Angeles' award-winning <u>For The Record</u> series and <u>the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing</u> <u>Arts</u>. Inspired by the Universal Pictures/Working Title motion picture written by Richard Curtis, *LOVE ACTUALLY* LIVE, presented by special arrangement with Universal Theatrical Group, will once again transform The Wallis' Bram Goldsmith Theater into a giant, immersive, cinema for the modern day. *Entertainment Weekly* called the end result, "Pitch perfect! Such a celebration of love, the holidays, and the movie itself that it's hard to not fall in love, actually." Media sponsorship is provided by KCRW.

**LOVE ACTUALLY LIVE** is adapted and directed by Anderson Davis, with musical supervision and arrangements by Jesse Vargas, vocal design by Tony Award nominee AnnMarie Milazzo, musical staging by Sumie Maeda, scenic design by Emmy Award winner Matthew Steinbrenner, lighting design by Michael Berger, sound design by Ben Soldate, costume design by Steve Mazurek, video design by Aaron Rhyne, casting by Stewart/Whitley and co-produced by Shane Scheel, Siobhan O'Neill and the Wallis Annenberg Center for Performing Arts.

Ticket prices are \$39-\$125 (subject to change) and go on sale Friday, September 20. The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is located at <u>9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills</u>. To purchase tickets and for more information, please call 310-746-4000 or visit TheWallis.org/Love.

# About the Artists

**TOMASINA ABATE** (Karen), reprising the role of Karen, may be remembered by For The Record fans from *Scorsese*, *Dear John Hughes, Baz Luhrmann, The Marshalls*, and *Tarantino*. Last year, she toured on a bus for the first time with *Postmodern Jukebox* then began working on an epic rock record with Damon Fox from The Cult. Soon to be releasing her debut album *Painted Crown*, she's best known by loyal fans, The Troopers, as a powerhouse rocker in her band, TOMASINA. Los Angeles born and raised, her West Coast musical theatre roles include Sheila in *A Chorus Line*, Lucy in *Jekyll & Hyde*, Velma Kelly in *Chicago*, Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*, Magenta in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Walt Disney Company's Pocahontas in *Animazement*, The Narrator in *Aladdin*, Cruella DeVille at El Capitan, and vocals for *Mickey's Magical Map* and *The Frightfully Fun Parade*.

JOHN BATTAGLIESE (David) was seen performing across the country in the First National Tour of *Cruel Intentions: The 90's Musical.* Las Vegas: *BAZ: Starcrossed Love* (Romeo, The Palazzo Theater); Regional: *Hairspray* (Link Larkin, The MUNY), *Have You Met Miss Jones*? with Academy Award Winner Shirley Jones (Jack Cassidy, The New Theater), *Grease* (Danny, New London Barn Playhouse), and *Grumpy Old Men* (La Mirada Theatre/Ogunquit Playhouse).

**DECLAN BENNETT** (Jamie) Hailing from Coventry, England, actor/musician Declan Bennett made his West End debut in the Boy George-penned musical *Taboo*, where he played the lead role Billy opposite George Michael himself before opening for him on his sold out UK tour. He subsequently moved to New York to star as Roger in cult rock opera *RENT* on Broadway, the original cast of *American Idiot*, the original Guy in the West End production

of *Once* and Jesus in the Olivier Award-winning Regents Park Open Air Theatre production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Alongside his theatre work and a TV career as a series regular on BBC's "Eastenders" as Charlie Cotton, Declan is also a fiercely independent singer songwriter, having released 4 albums and 4 EP's and is currently working on a theatre piece based on his current trilogy of EP's *Unsolicited Material*.

**JAMES BYOUS** (Mark) is an LA-based singer-songwriter, professional hitchhiker, and classic troubadour. He was featured in 2018's Netflix Original Series, "Westside." He's been described as "the next Bruce Springsteen" by some people that you'd be surprised to hear that from. All that aside, James has worked hard to hone his ability to draw in an audience with honest storytelling, raw musical talent, and subtle strangeness.

**GABRIELA FRANCESCA CARRILLO** (Aurelia), originally hailing from Chicago, moved to Los Angeles after graduating from Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she studied vocal performance, songwriting and drama. Since moving to the West Coast, she has played Lucha in *American Mariachi* (South Coast Rep), Miriam in *The Prince Of Egypt* (Tuacahn Amphitheatre), Betty Spaghetti in *Umpo: A League Of Their Own*, Florence in *Chess* (Coachella Valley Rep) and sang background vocals for Beyoncé in her Coachella rehearsals, also appearing in the Netflix special *Homecoming*. Aside from performing on stage, she writes and releases original music under the name "Gabriela Francesca," which can be found on Spotify, Apple Music, and more. She also has a successful astrology/lifestyle YouTube channel with over 72k subscribers.

**NAYAH DAMASEN** (Joanna), a 14-year-old rising star, performed in her first musical at the age 4. Through Starting Arts Productions, she played lead roles in *Flat Stanley, The Little Mermaid*, and *The Wiz*. Renowned for singing the National Anthem for major sporting events and charities including the NBA, NFL, MLB and The America's Cup, her most prestigious performance was singing the National Anthem before Game 1 of the 2015 & 2018 NBA Finals. Interviewed by "Good Morning America," her performances were televised worldwide. As an actress, her TV credits include "Modern Family," "Grey's Anatomy," Disney's "Bizaardvark" and Nickelodeon's "Henry Danger." Her feature films include *How To Be A Latin Lover* and *Do Not Reply*.

**ROGELIO DOUGLAS, JR.** (Peter) whose PMJ YouTube video has over 1 million views, is an original For The Record Live alum who just came off tour as emcee/lead singer for Post Modern Jukebox. The legendary Quincy Jones chose him to be resident artist at Q's Bar & Lounge in Dubai, where he won the Best Live Entertainment Award from *TimeOut* and *WhatsOn Dubai* magazines. He has recorded with David Foster, Glen Ballard and Black Eyed Peas and was a lead vocalist on ABC's "Dancing with the Stars." His original music can be heard on The Discovery Network's "Deadliest Catch," HBO's "Silicon Valley" and FOX's "Empire," where his new single, "Witness," will premier this season. His television and film credits include "Chicago P.D.," "Ray Donovan," "Orange is the New Black," *Whiplash, Superfast!* and *Straight Outta Compton*. On Broadway, he has performed in *In The Heights* and *Riverdance* and played Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid*. This year he received the NAACP Award for Best Supporting Actor as well as two Ovation Awards for *Five Guys Named Moe*.

**JON ROBERT HALL** (Daniel) is a Los Angeles native. He recently returned from the Broadway National Tour of *Wicked* as the male lead role of Fiyero. Prior to that, he was Tom Chisum in the seven-time Emmy Award winning *"Grease* Live" on Fox, and he played a recurring role in the Warblers on "Glee" for three years.

**CARSON HIGGINS** (Ensemble/Understudy) is a New York-based actor and singer who has been seen all over the world in various plays and musicals including the international tour of Green Day's *American Idiot*. Born and raised in Malibu, CA, he graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and has studied improv at The Groundlings. He was also a top 50 finalist on season 10 of "American Idol."

**DOUG KREEGER** (Harry/Dance Captain) has Broadway/Off-Broadway credits including *Les Misérables, The Visit* (Actors Fund Concert), *Rooms: A Rock Romance* (Cast Recording) and *Thrill Me: The Leopold & Loeb Story* (Cast Recording), as well as shows at The Public Theatre, Connelly Theater, NYMF, and the NY Fringe. He has toured nationally with *Peter Pan*, internationally with *Hair* (Cast Recording) and *Grease*, and played lead roles at Carnegie Hall and Walt Disney Hall. He is a company member of For The Record Live, having appeared at The Wallis in *Scorsese: American Crime Requiem* and *Love Actually Live*, as well as *Dear John Hughes* at DBA and *The Brat Pack* at

Break Room 86. Regionally, he has appeared with Arkansas Rep, Barrington Stage, Bay Street Theatre, Flat Rock Playhouse, Forestburgh Playhouse, Geva Theatre, Metrostage, Pittsburgh CLO, Reagle Players, Signature Theatre, The Old Globe and Yale Rep. He has been recognized with Ovation Award nomination, two NY Fringe Awards, two Helen Hayes Award Nominations and two Po'okela Awards. Born and raised in Honolulu, he received his B.F.A from Tisch at NYU, and RADA in London. He is co-writer of The Demise (NYMF) and essays published by The Huffington Post.

**RUBY LEWIS** (Juliet/Mia) has made headlines in New York, LA, Las Vegas and across the country as a versatile singer, actress and dancer. She starred as Indigo in Cirque du Soleil's premiere Broadway show, *Paramour*, which led to features on *Nightline*, *AOLBuild* & two *Macys Thanksgiving Day Parades*. Most recently, she played Betty Hutton and Peggy Lee in *Lights Out: Nat 'King' Cole* at the Geffen Playhouse and Marilyn Monroe in *Marilyn: The New Musical* at the Paris Theatre in Las Vegas, backed by the Marilyn Monroe Estate. Lewis became known for the role of Daisy in the critically-acclaimed production of *BAZ Vegas* as a long-standing member of For The Record. National Tours: *Gypsy, Grease, Jersey Boys, We Will Rock You.* On television, she's been seen on "Girl Meets World," "Masters of Sex," "Heart of Dixie," "Desperate Housewives" and "Entertainment Tonight," among others. She performs her own one-woman show, *Blue-Eyed Soul* across the country.

**EMILY LOPEZ** (Ensemble/Understudy) is a multi-dimensional artist who was born in Colton, California. A self-described "professional waif," she's spent her life traveling the world. Her music is available to stream at SoundCloud.

**CHRIS MANN** (Daniel, December 8 – 12) lit up a global audience with his 2012 post Super Bowl XLVI performance on NBC's "The Voice," which was watched by a record-breaking 37.6 million viewers. His chart-topping duet with superstar Christina Aguilera solidified him as one of the most unique voices in the history of the show. His albums *Roads, Constellation* and *Home For Christmas* have hit #1 on Billboard's Heatseekers Chart and appeared on the Billboard Top 200 and iTunes charts. Mann has starred in his own concert TV specials for PBS and toured to soldout audiences across America, Mexico, and Asia. He was later cast by Sir Cameron Mackintosh and Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber as The Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera*'s 25th Anniversary Tour. Mann donned the iconic mask for over 700 performances, with critics hailing him as "the best Phantom since Michael Crawford." Mann has performed with the National Symphony for President Barack Obama and has also performed on shows including "Ellen," "The Today Show," "Conan," "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" and "The Late Late Show with James Cordon." His newest studio albums, *NOISE!* and *Christmas Jukebox*, are available on all streaming platforms.

**CARRIE MANOLAKOS** (Natalie) has Broadway credits including Sophie in *Mamma Mia* and Elphaba on the second national tour of *Wicked*. Her soundtracks include *The Greatest Showman, Incredibles 2, Fosse/Verdon,* and the *Lizzie* concept record. Her full length album, *The 44th Chord,* released in May 2019, was featured on Z100 along with Madonna, Ariana Grande, Celine Dion, and Katy Perry. She has sung with artists such as Hugh Jackman at the Metropolitan Opera and Phish at Madison Square Garden and will be making her Carnegie Hall debut in February 2020 with the New York Pops. She is widely known for her interpretation of Radiohead's "Creep" now at 4 million views with Gawker, saying her rendition "will make your ears orgasm" and Entertainment Weekly for being in the top 12 best Radiohead covers of all time. She's been featured in the *New York Times, The New Yorker, Huffington Post, Daily Beast,* MTV and *MSNnow*.

**MOLLY ROGERS** (Judy/Violinist) was born and raised in Frankfort, Kentucky and began violin lessons at the age of 4. She has since performed in over 25 different countries and has worked for a wide range of artists including David Foster, Adele, Kendrick Lamar, Journey, and many others. She has been a part of several tours, most notably as a soloist for Hans Zimmer, as well the solo violinist/violist and additional vocalist for the *Game of Thrones Live* show. She makes her home in LA with her husband Scott and dog Capo and performs with her string ensemble, the Orchid Quartet.

**AUBRIE SELLERS** (Sarah), Tennessee born, is a singer-songwriter and actress living in Los Angeles who burst onto the music scene in 2016 with her critically acclaimed album *New City Blues*, named one of the best country albums of the year by *Rolling Stone*. Garnering attention from outlets like *SPIN* and *The Village Voice*, and featured in *Elle* 

*Magazine*'s prestigious Women in Music issue, Sellers has spent the past few years creating her upcoming sophomore album, *Far From Home*. Her three recently released singles off the forthcoming record showcase her "garage country" sound. When she isn't writing music or touring, she spends her time in the acting world, having honed her skills at Stella Adler in New York and The Strasberg Institute in Los Angeles.

**LEVI SMITH** (Sam), who makes his debut at The Wallis, has appeared on Broadway in *A Bronx Tale: The Musical* (Young Cologero), the national tour of *A Christmas Story* (swing/ensemble), the World Premiere of *It's a Wonderful Life* (Tommy & Young Sam Wainwright), *Sweeney Todd* (Toby), Seussical (JoJo), *The Little Mermaid* (Flounder), *Mary Poppins* (Michael) and *The Music Man* (Winthrop). His TV/ Film appearances: include "The First Wives" (BET), "The Plot Against America" (HBO), "Beating Harvey" and "The Way That I Take."

**REX SMITH** (Billy Mack) has worn many hats in his career. As a hard rocker, he was signed to a six album deal with Columbia starting at age 20 and was managed by Aerosmith's management, toured with his band REX and for two years with Ted Nugent. He became a teen idol after playing Madison Square Garden, and was offered a lead in the NBC movie of the week *Sooner or Later*. His album spawned the platinum hit, "You Take My Breath Away." He starred in the ABC series "Street Hawk" and the original "Dare Devil" and "As The World Turns" and hosted "Solid Gold." On Broadway, he starred in *Grease* (Danny Zuko in the original production and the national tour 16 years later), *The Pirates Of Penzance, Grand Hotel, Anything Goes, Sunset Blvd* (with Diahann Carroll), *Annie Get Your Gun, Kiss Me Kate* and more.

**ANDERSON DAVIS** (Director, Adaptor) joined the For The Record team adapting and directing the Paul Thomas Anderson chapter of the series, *Boogie Nights*, and has since become Artistic Director of the company. He has gone on to develop and direct each FTR production including *Scorsese: American Crime Requiem* at The Wallis, *BAZ: Star Crossed Love* at the Palazzo Theater in Las Vegas, *Tarantino* in Los Angeles and at the Montreal International Jazz Festival, and *The Brat Pack* on the Norwegian Escape. Credits as an actor include *Les Miserables* (Broadway) and Lincoln Center's South Pacific (Nat'l tour, directed by Bartlett Sher). Originally from Louisiana, he received his BFA from Carnegie Mellon University.

# About the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts (Producer):

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.

# About FOR THE RECORD LIVE (Producer):

Created by Shane Scheel and Anderson Davis, For The Record Live is an unconventional theatrical series that brings the soul of treasured directors' films front and center: the soundtrack. Staged in a variety of venues that immerse the audience in the excitement, carefully-selected songs from movie soundtracks are brought to life. Part rockconcert and part musical theater, For The Record Live unites characters across a film directors' cannon into one world. In 2010, the new generation cabaret experience began in a 60-seat bar in Hollywood and has featured the works of acclaimed directors Quentin Tarantino, John Hughes, Baz Luhrmann, The Coen Brothers, Paul Thomas Anderson, Martin Scorsese, Robert Zemeckis, and Garry and Penny Marshall. For The Record Live has performed around the country with shows in Los Angeles, Las Vegas (a three-year run with Cirque du Soleil and The Venetian), New York, Chicago, Indianapolis, The Ace Hotel in Palm Springs, SXSW in Austin, TX, The Montreal International Jazz Festival and Norwegian Cruise Line's mega-ship, The Escape. For The Record Live is carving a new place in the market that transcends jukebox musicals and creates a transportive experience making the audience feel like they are twisting in Jack Rabbit Slims, in detention at Shermer High School, or toasting in Gatsby's Mansion. www.fortherecordlive.com @FTRLIVE #ForTheRecordLive

#### About Love Actually

Written and directed by Academy Award<sup>®</sup> nominee Richard Curtis (About Time, Bridget Jones's Diary and Notting Hill), *Love Actually* is the unforgettable holiday classic from Universal Pictures/Working Title that has had audiences laughing, crying and hugging since it first premiered in the U.S. in 2003. Hugh Grant, Liam Neeson, Colin Firth, Laura Linney, Keira Knightley, Emma Thompson, Martin Freeman, Andrew Lincoln and Bill Nighy lead an illustrious all-star cast that charm and delight in this heartwarming romantic comedy about eight couples whose lives intersect shortly before the holidays. The film's hilariously unpredictable plot examines how love inspires experiences that are alternately exciting, unexpected and unequalled. Since its debut 15 years ago, Love Actually has become a new holiday classic, and according to Entertainment Weekly, "one of the great Christmas movies" of all time.

# **EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:**

#### WHAT:

The Wallis & For The Record Live's Production of LOVE ACTUALLY LIVE Inspired by the Universal Pictures/Working Title motion picture written by Richard Curtis Presented by special arrangement with Universal Theatrical Group Adapted By/Director Anderson Davis

CAST

**Rex Smith** Carrie Manolakos **Doug Kreeger Tomasina Abate Carson Higgins Emily Lopez** Rogelio Douglas Jr. Declan Bennett Jon Robert Hall Chris Mann\* James Byous Ruby Lewis Aubrie Sellers Gabriela Francesca Carrillo Levi Smith Navah Damasen John Battagliese Molly Rogers Tom Zmuda Alex Csillag

#### CREDITS

Musical Supervision/Arrangements Jesse Vargas Vocal Design AnnMarie Milazzo Musical Staging Sumie Maeda Scenic Design Matthew Steinbrenner Lighting Design Michael Berger Sound Design Ben Soldate Costume Design Steve Mazurek Video Design Aaron Rhyne

#### WHEN:

Wednesday, November 27 through Friday, December 29, 2019 Weekdays 7:30 pm (except Dec. 27 – 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm; no performances, November 28, December 24-25); Saturdays, 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm Sundays, 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm \*Chris Mann plays the role of Daniel from December 8 – 12 only

# **RUN TIME:**

Running time is 2 hours and 45 minutes, including a 15-minute intermission

#### WHERE:

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

#### TICKET PRICES AND INFORMATION:

\$39-125 (subject to change) TheWallis.org/Love 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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