



Jean Marcus



Owen Brooker

Wednesday, February 21, 2018, 8pm  
 Zellerbach Hall

## Tony Kushner and Sarah Vowell

### *The Lincoln Legacy: The Man and His Presidency*

with

Prof. Brian DeLay, UC Berkeley Department of History

**Tony Kushner** was born in New York City in 1956, and raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana. He is best known for his two-part epic, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*. Kushner's other plays include *A Bright Room Called Day*, *Slavs!*, *Hydrotaphia*, *Homebody/Kabul*, and *Caroline, or Change*, the musical for which he wrote book and lyrics, with music by composer Jeanine Tesori. Kushner has translated and adapted Pierre Corneille's *The Illusion*, S.Y. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*, Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Person of Sezuan* and *Mother Courage and Her Children*, and the English-language libretto for the children's opera *Brundibár* by Hans

Krasa. He wrote the screenplays for Mike Nichols' film of *Angels in America*, and Steven Spielberg's *Munich*. In 2012 he wrote the screenplay for Spielberg's movie *Lincoln*. His screenplay was nominated for an Academy Award and won the New York Film Critics Circle Award, Boston Society of Film Critics Award, Chicago Film Critics Award, and several other honors. Kushner's books include *But the Giraffe: A Curtain Raising* and *Brundibar: the Libretto*, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak; *The Art of Maurice Sendak: 1980 to the Present*; and *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict*, co-edited with

*Cal Performances' 2017–18 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

Alisa Solomon. His recent work includes a collection of one-act plays entitled *Tiny Kushner*, and *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*. In addition, a revival of *Angels in America* ran off-Broadway at the Signature Theater and won the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Revival in 2011.

Kushner is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, an Emmy Award, two Tony Awards, three Obie Awards, an Arts Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a PEN/Laura Pels Award, a Spirit of Justice Award from the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, a Cultural Achievement Award from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, a *Chicago Tribune* Literary Prize for lifetime achievement, the 2012 National Medal of Arts, and the 2015 Lifetime Achievement in the American Theater Award, among many others. *Caroline, or Change*, produced at the National Theatre of Great Britain, received the *Evening Standard* Award, the London Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the Olivier Award for Best Musical. In September 2008, Tony Kushner became the first recipient of the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award, the largest theater award in the US. He is the subject of a documentary film, *Wrestling with Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner*, made by the Oscar-winning filmmaker Freida Lee Mock. He lives in Manhattan with his husband, Mark Harris.

**Sarah Vowell** is the *New York Times*' bestselling author of seven nonfiction books on American history and culture. By examining the connections between the American past and present, she offers personal, often humorous accounts of everything from presidents and their assassins to colonial religious fanatics, as well as thoughts on American Indians, utopian dreamers, pop music, and the odd cranky cartographer. Her most recent book is entitled *Lafayette in the Somewhat United States*.

Vowell's book *Unfamiliar Fishes* is the intriguing history of our 50th state, Hawaii, annexed in 1898. Replete with a cast of beguiling and often tragic characters, including an overthrown Hawaiian queen, whalers, missionaries,

sugar barons, Teddy Roosevelt, and assorted con men, *Unfamiliar Fishes* is another history lesson in Americana as only Vowell can tell it—with brainy wit and droll humor.

*The Wordy Shipmates* examines the New England Puritans and their journey to and impact on America. She studies John Winthrop's 1630 sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" and the bloody story that resulted from the belief in American exceptionalism. And she also traces the relationship of Winthrop, Massachusetts' first governor, and Roger Williams, the Calvinist minister who founded Rhode Island—an unlikely friendship that was emblematic of the polar extremes of the American foundation. Throughout she reveals how American history can show up in the most unexpected places in our modern culture, often in poignant ways.

Vowell's book *Assassination Vacation* is a haunting and surprisingly hilarious road trip to tourist sites devoted to the murders of presidents Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley. She examines what these acts of political violence reveal about our national character and our contemporary society.

She is also the author of two essay collections, *The Partly Cloudy Patriot* and *Take the Cannoli*. Her first book, *Radio On*, is her year-long diary of listening to the radio in 1995. She was guest editor for *The Best American Non-required Reading 2017*.

Vowell was a contributing editor for the public radio show *This American Life* from 1996–2008, where she produced numerous commentaries and documentaries and toured the country in many of the program's live shows. She was one of the original contributors to *McSweeney's*, also participating in many of the quarterly's readings and shows. She has been a columnist for *Salon.com*, *Time*, and *San Francisco Weekly*, and is a contributing op-ed writer for the *New York Times*.

Vowell has made numerous appearances on the *Late Show with David Letterman*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, and the *Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. She is the voice of teen superhero Violet Parr in Brad Bird's Academy Award-winning *The Incredibles*, a Pixar Animation Studios film.