

Saturday, May 9, 2026, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Lara Downes and Friends

This Land: Reflections on America

Lara Downes, *piano*

Judy Collins, *vocals*

Tarriona “Tank” Ball, *vocals*

Invoke

Karl Mitze, *viola, mandolin*

Geoff Manyin, *cello*

Zach Matteson, *violin*

Nick Montopoli, *violin and banjo*

Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

PROGRAM (subject to change)

Paul Simon/*America*

Lara Downes

Willie Nelson/*Changing Skies*

Lara Downes & Invoke

Kian Ravei/*Variations on This Land is Your Land*

Lara Downes

Alchemy

Invoke

Could be Anything

Tarriona “Tank” Ball

Andre J. Thomas/*I Dream A World*

Lara Downes & Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

Margaret Bonds/*Hold On*

Lara Downes & Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

Margaret Bonds/*Troubled Water*

Lara Downes

Stephen Foster/*Hard Times Come Again No More*

Lara Downes & Invoke

Starting Over

Tarriona “Tank” Ball

Evolve and Travel

Invoke

Sam Cooke/*A Change is Gonna Come*

Lara Downes & Invoke

INTERMISSION

Selections to be announced from the stage

Judy Collins with Lara Downes & Invoke

Traditional/*This Little Light of Mine*

Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

Leonard Bernstein – Bill Evans/*Lucky to be Me*

Lara Downes

Open to Thyself
Tarriona “Tank” Ball

Little Things
Tarriona “Tank” Ball

Louis Armstrong/*What a Wonderful World*
Lara Downes & Invoke

Traditional/*Oh Happy Day*
Lara Downes & Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

Traditional/*Amazing Grace*
Full Company

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

At this concert, chart-topping pianist and cultural visionary Lara Downes is joined by a group of groundbreaking American artists who represent the breadth of our musical landscape: Folk icon Judy Collins, the Austin-based multi-instrumental Americana quartet Invoke, Grammy award-winning singer and poet Tarriona “Tank” Ball, and the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir join Downes for a revelatory celebration reflecting the shared human experiences and journeys that connect us as Americans, regardless of time and place.

Creating a gathering space for all of us to contemplate the long arc of history and recognize our capacity for empathy and community, Downes and her friends explore the timeless truths and beauties of American music “beyond category.”



Recently named “Classical Woman of the Year” by NPR’s *Performance Today*, American pianist Lara Downes has been called “a musical ray of hope” (*NBC News*) and “a trailblazing pianist who combines exquisite musicality with an acute awareness of how an artist can make a positive and lasting social impact” (*Piano Maga-*

zine). She seeks inspiration from the legacies of history, family, and collective memory, creating performances and recording projects that serve as gathering spaces for her listeners to find common ground and shared experience. Besides her visibility as a performer and *Billboard* chart-topping recording artist, Downes is the creator and host of the popular NPR show *AMPLIFY with Lara Downes* and boasts 100,000-plus weekly listeners to her nationally syndicated radio programs. In the words of American conductor JoAnn Falletta, “Lara Downes is a perfect artist for our time, a champion of new and neglected music, an extraordinary communicator, a passionate advocate for our art form.”

Through her groundbreaking initiative titled *The Declaration Project*, Downes celebrates the 250th anniversary of the US by reflecting on the nation’s founding principles. The multimedia world premiere performance will take place at New York’s Lincoln Center in July 2026, centered on a triptych of works—respectively titled *Life*, *Liberty*, and *Pursuit of Happiness*—that the pianist has commissioned from Grammy-winning composers Valerie Coleman, Arturo O’Farrill, and Christopher Tin. Through a series of regional residencies and a website, Downes is also collecting material in many forms from Americans of all ages and back-

grounds to be incorporated into the performance. Following the premiere, she will tour *The Declaration Project* in both the US and Europe.

A sought-after piano soloist, Downes recently performed Florence Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* David Patrick Stearns noting that she "gave the imposing piano writing the heat of Liszt while maintaining the specific personality of Price." Downes has also appeared with the orchestras of Boston, Detroit, Dallas, Louisville, and Indianapolis, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; and in recitals and residencies at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Big Ears festival, Disney Hall, Ravinia, Tanglewood, the Gilmore Festival, Carolina Performing Arts, and Washington Performing Arts. Her creative collaborations embrace an eclectic range of artists including musical polymath Rhiannon Giddens, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Rita Dove, bassist Christian McBride, Broadway legend Brian Stokes Mitchell, and violinists Tessa Lark and Daniel Hope. Close partnerships with a host of prominent genre- and generation-spanning composers include, in addition to the three *Declaration Project* composers, Billy Childs, Paola Prestini, Adolphus Hailstork, and Clarice Assad.

A cultural visionary, Downes is also increasingly active as a curator and creative partner for institutions including Lincoln Center and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, where she serves as the orchestra's inaugural Creative Partner. She also serves as Resident Artist for the Classical California media group (KDFC San Francisco and KUSC Los Angeles).

As a recording artist, Downes' uniquely insightful approach to concept and curation has resulted in an acclaimed series of chart-topping releases on the Pentatone, Sony Masterworks, and Rising Sun labels. Her latest, *This Land*, was featured on NPR's

Morning Edition, in the *Wall Street Journal*, and in *Downbeat Magazine*; her 2023 release, *Love at Last*, was featured as an NPR *Tiny Desk Concert*; and *America Again*, selected by NPR as one of "10 Albums that Saved 2016," was hailed by the *Boston Globe* as "a balm for a country riven by disunion."

AMPLIFY with Lara Downes, the NPR music video series that the pianist created and hosts, features intimate, profoundly personal video conversations with the visionary artists and cultural leaders who are shaping the creative present and future. Downes' work has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Sphinx Venture Fund, and the Center for Cultural Innovation, among others.

Downes' fierce commitment to activism and advocacy has led to her role as Artist Ambassador for Headcount, a nonpartisan organization that uses the power of music to register voters and promote participation in democracy.



Judy Collins has long inspired audiences with sublime vocals, boldly vulnerable songwriting, personal life triumphs, and a firm commitment to social activism. In the 1960s, she evoked both the idealism and steely determination of a generation united against social and environmental injustices. Six decades later, her luminescent presence continues to shine as new generations bask in the glow of her iconic 55-album body of work and heed inspiration from her spiritual discipline to thrive in the music industry for more than half a century.

The award-winning singer-songwriter is esteemed for her imaginative interpretations of traditional and contemporary folk standards and her own poetically poignant original compositions. Her stunning rendition of

Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" from her landmark 1967 album, *Wildflowers*, has been welcomed into the Grammy Hall of Fame. Collins' dreamy and sweetly intimate version of "Send in the Clowns," a ballad written by Stephen Sondheim for the Broadway musical *A Little Night Music*, won "Song of the Year" at the 1975 Grammy Awards. She has produced several top ten hits and gold- and platinum-selling albums. Recently, contemporary and classic artists including Rufus Wainwright, Shawn Colvin, Dolly Parton, Joan Baez, and Leonard Cohen honored her legacy with the album *Born to the Breed: A Tribute to Judy Collins*.

In 2026, Collins bids adieu to the road with her *Sweet Judy Blue Eyes Farewell Tour*, launching July 4, 2026, and running through 2027—an expansive final run across North America and beyond that gives audiences one last chance to experience her timeless voice and storytelling live. The tour follows a remarkable recent chapter: six new albums released since 2015, the artistic renaissance of *Spellbound* (her first album of self-penned songs, nominated for Best Folk Album at the 2023 Grammy Awards), and her 2025 poetry collection *Sometimes It's Heaven: Poems of Love, Loss and Redemption*—a vivid extension of the honesty and grace that have defined her enduring legacy.



Tarriona 'Tank' Ball is a Grammy-winning singer-songwriter and poet known for being the front-woman of the New Orleans-based band, Tank and The Bangas. Born in New Orleans,

Louisiana, she is highly recognized for her compelling vocals and poignant, creative lyrics. As a Grammy-winning poet, she has successfully blended poetry and music in a unique way, contributing significantly to her band's eclectic and dynamic sound. Ball's distinct style draws inspiration from a range of

genres, including jazz, funk, soul, hip-hop, and gospel. Under her leadership, Tank and The Bangas won NPR's Tiny Desk Contest in 2017, which provided them with substantial national exposure. Since then, she has collaborated with artists such as Robert Glasper, Terence Blanchard, Lalah Hathaway, Norah Jones, Moonchild, Rapsody, and many others. Ball released her first book of poetry, *Vulnerable AF*, in 2021 and her follow-up, *The Thing About Falling*, last fall. She has received four Grammy nominations as well as an Emmy nomination as host of the PBS show *Rituals*.



Invoke successfully dodges even the most valiant attempts at genre classification. The multi-instrumental quartet encompasses traditions from across America, including bluegrass, Appalachian fiddle tunes, jazz, and minimalism. Fueled by a passion for storytelling, Invoke weaves all of these styles together to form a unique contemporary repertoire that also features original works composed by and for the group.

In 2018, Invoke was named a winner of the Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition in New York City and received First Prize at both the M-Prize International Chamber Arts competition in Ann Arbor, MI, and the Coltman Competition in Austin, Texas. Invoke was the Young Professional String Quartet in Residence at the University of Texas at Austin from 2016–18.

Invoke has shared the stage with some of the most acclaimed chamber groups in the country, including the Westerlies, Miró, and Ensō Quartets and the US Army Field Band. Invoke has also appeared with musicians from various genres, including composer-performer Clarice Assad, chamber rock

group San Fermin, indie group Never Shout Never, and DC beatboxer/rapper/spoons virtuoso Christylez Bacon. Along with Lara Downes, the group continues to collaborate with composer-performer Clarice Assad and trumpeter Brandon Ridenour.

Invoke's discography includes its debut album, *Souls in the Mud* (2015); *Furious Creek* (2018); *Fantastic Planet* (2021); and *Evolve & Travel* (2023). The group's recording credits appear on bassist/composer Ethan Foote's solo album *Fields Burning*, singer/songwriter Marian McLaughlin's *Spirit House*, jazz/soul singer Rochelle Rice's EP *Wonder*, and many more. Invoke has also worked extensively with composer Graham Reynolds and his nonprofit organization, Golden Hornet, recording volumes IV–VI of *String Quartet Smackdown*, *Marfa: A Country & Western Big Band Suite*, and music for the films *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* (2019) and *Hit Man* (2023).

Invoke is strongly committed to championing diverse American voices through commissioning and highlighting new music. Its ongoing commissioning project *American Postcards* asks composers to pick a time and place in American history and tell its story through the group's unique artistry.

Invoke is sponsored by and endorses Dolfinos products and utilizes both their Mini-pup music stands and chinrest systems.

For more information, visit www.invoke-sound.com.



Founded in 1986, the mission of the **Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, Inc.** is to inspire joy and unity among

all people through Black gospel and spiritual music traditions. Born out of a gospel music workshop led by Terrance Kelly at Living Jazz's Jazz Camp West, it became an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization in 1991.

OIGC currently comprises more than 300 singers across multiple choirs from a wide range of faiths, races, and cultures whose performances of historic forms of African American music bring a message of inclusion and belonging to diverse audiences.

The namesake Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, a “treasured Bay Area institution,” performs 25–30 times each year and is inclusive of an ensemble of nine to 15 singers. Singing with the same passion and precision wherever they are, the group's exquisite harmonies and stirring gospel repertoire have led to performances with around the world and with artists and groups such as Joshua Nelson, the Prince of Koshers Gospel; the Five Blind Boys of Alabama; and the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

OIGC also supports additional choirs including the Oakland Interfaith Youth Choir founded in 1997. OIYC provides musical, educational, and social opportunities for Bay Area youth, as well as the chance for mentoring and college scholarships. In 2013, the Oakland Interfaith Community Choir held its first rehearsal with just 30 members, but it then grew exponentially, reaching almost 250 members in just five years. Despite being a non-auditioned choir and meeting only once a month, OICC features a great degree of talent and enthusiasm and performs several times each year, including their signature summer gospel concert.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, OIGC stayed connected with choir members and audiences through virtual rehearsals and performances. The inaugural world choir project *I Won't Stop Singing My Praise* premiered in 2021 and featured singers from nine countries performing in five different languages.

The summer of 2022 saw the acquisition of the Oakland Youth Chorus, followed by the first rehearsal of the Oakland Interfaith Kids Choir, bolstering OIGC's youth program and outreach to youth ages 5 to 18.