

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New York City Center announces upcoming Encores! productions:

The Life, Adapted and Directed by Tony Award winner **Billy Porter**;
The Tap Dance Kid, Directed by Tony Award winner **Kenny Leon**, Adapted by **Lydia Diamond**; and
An Annual Celebration of Iconic American Musicals: a new tradition at City Center exploring the ways
musical theater connects us across generations

In-development productions and spring 2020 cancelled shows explored in new behind-the-scenes
digital series **Encores! Inside the Revival** launching October 14

Encores! team adds new leadership and artistic voices:

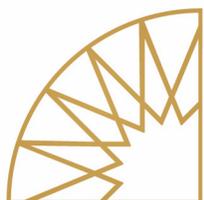
Tony Award winner **Clint Ramos** joins as Encores! Producing Creative Director

Camille A. Brown, **Eisa Davis**, and **Robert O'Hara** join as Encores! Creative Advisors

Jenny Gersten to serve as Producer of Musical Theater for New York City Center

New York, NY/September 18, 2020 – New York City Center President & CEO **Arlene Shuler** today announced the musical productions in development as part of the next chapter of the longstanding Tony-honored Encores! series, all of which will be explored in-depth as part of the 2020-2021 season in a new digital series **Encores! Inside the Revival**. The five-part mini documentary series, which launches **Lear deBessonet**'s first season as Encores! Artistic Director, will explore the behind-the-scenes process—through conversations and performances—for the productions being developed and ultimately produced at City Center upon reopening.

“Last fall, when I began to program my first Encores! season I never could have imagined the world in which we find ourselves today. As we look ahead, it is essential that we preserve the Encores! mission and weave an ever-deepening portrait of the history of American musicals. But that alone won't be enough to meet our world, our



city, and musical theater as it evolves today,” said **Encores! Artistic Director Lear deBessonet**. “I believe the future of a thriving Encores! has three prongs: **revivals of hidden gems, productions where artists reclaim work for our time through their own personal lens, and celebrations that look at the ways musical theater can connect us, in this city and across the country.** These upcoming projects hold seeds of all three tenets.”

In-development productions include: ***The Life***, music by **Cy Coleman**, lyrics by **Ira Gasman**, with book by **David Newman**, Gasman, and Coleman, adapted and directed by Tony Award winner **Billy Porter**; and ***The Tap Dance Kid***, music by **Henry Krieger**, lyrics by **Robert Lorick**, with book by **Charles Blackwell**, directed by Tony Award winner **Kenny Leon**, choreographed by **Jared Grimes**, and adapted by **Lydia Diamond**, based on the novel “Nobody’s Family is Going to Change” by Louis Fitzhugh. A third title, to be announced, will reflect Mayor La Guardia’s founding mission that New York City Center present the best of music, theater, and dance for the people of New York. While Encores! usually revives lesser known musicals, the series will usher in a new annual tradition in the spirit of La Guardia’s accessible invitation, whereby the performance of a classic title will celebrate the way musical theater connect us. In addition, the Encores! Inside the Revival digital series will include episodes on ***Love Life*** (music by **Kurt Weill**, book and lyrics by **Alan Jay Lerner**) and ***Thoroughly Modern Millie*** (new music by **Jeanine Tesori**, new lyrics by **Dick Scanlan**, book by **Richard Morris** and Dick Scanlan) which were cancelled earlier this year due to the pandemic.

Encores! welcomes new artistic voices

It was also announced today that Tony Award winner **Clint Ramos** will join the Encores! artistic team in the newly created leadership role of Encores! Producing Creative Director. Ramos, a member of the Encores! Off-Center principal design team for seven seasons and the first person of color to win a Tony Award for Costume Design of a Play (*Eclipsed*, 2016), will partner with deBessonet, longtime Encores! Music Director **Rob Berman**, and Tony Award-winning producer **Jenny Gersten**, who joins the team as Producer of Musical Theater for New York City Center.

In this new role, Ramos will serve as a core leader in partnership with deBessonet, working to envision and plan for the future of Encores! He will shepherd new projects and work directly with artists in realizing their vision from development to production with a focus on innovation. **Encores! Producing Creative Director Clint Ramos** said, “Having been in residency for seven summers, I have a deep abiding love for Encores! and New York City



Center. I am extremely excited to join this team and begin work on further enriching the mission of celebrating the American musical in all its diverse traditions. I want to honor that mission through expanding equitable presence in our programming and through building transformative theatrical practices. As we continue the Encores! legacy of excellence and exploration, I look forward to further innovating not only our work, but our partnerships with our artists, our audiences, and with the city that we serve.”

In addition, Encores! will welcome Tony-nominated and Obie Award-winning choreographer **Camille A. Brown**, Obie Award-winning playwright and performer **Eisa Davis**, and Obie Award-winning director and playwright **Robert O'Hara** as Creative Advisors to the series. Partnering with the team, they will lend guidance on artistic work and advise in developing creative systems that uphold the commitment to anti-racism at Encores! and City Center.

New series goes behind-the-scenes at Encores!

Through the new **Encores! Inside the Revival** digital series, launching **October 14**, deBessonnet and Ramos open up the unique Encores! creative process through performances and one-on-one conversations with the artists invested in reviving these productions. Produced in partnership with filmmaker **Juan L. Espinal**, each episode will examine a specific aspect of the artist’s approach to bringing the Encores! production back to life, for our time, and provide historical context for the original Broadway production. Encores! Inside the Revival will pull back the curtain on this rich explorative process and allow the artists’ vision to emerge in their own voices, culminating in the live performance when City Center is able to reopen to the public.

Encores! Inside the Revival ***The Life***

In the first installment of the series, Emmy and Tony Award-winning artist **Billy Porter** (FX’s *Pose*) takes audiences through his reimagining of the 1997 Tony-nominated musical, *The Life*. Interviewed by Encores! Producing Creative Director **Clint Ramos**, Porter discusses his vision for an updated take on the story of Queen, a prostitute, and her fellow sex workers, who strive for a better life against all oppressive forces in Times Square in 1980. By re-envisioning the main character of Queen, Porter transforms and evolves the story of *The Life* into one of hope and survival, honoring the characters’ given circumstances, and revealing their universal humanity.



Encores! Inside the Revival
The Tap Dance Kid

Tony Award-winning director **Kenny Leon** (*A Raisin in the Sun*) dives into the 1983 Tony-nominated musical *The Tap Dance Kid*, centered around the life of an upper-middle class Black family and a ten-year-old's dream of being a professional tap dancer despite the challenges posed by his lawyer father and society. Leon, alongside book adaptor **Lydia Diamond**, will give audiences an up-close look at the percussive heart of the story with the help of choreographer **Jared Grimes**.

Encores! Inside the Revival
Love Life

Tony Award winner **Victoria Clark** (Director), Consulting Producer for Musical Theater and previous Encores! Artistic Director **Jack Viertel**, and Music Director **Rob Berman** discuss their process of imagining Kurt Weill and Alan Jay Lerner's rarely seen 1948 musical *Love Life* for Encores! The team explores how *Love Life*—a musical depicting more than a century and a half of American history through the eyes of a family who never ages and the challenges they face in a rapidly changing world—resonates more than ever as its values, social satire, and activism comment on the national divorce we currently find ourselves in.

Encores! Inside the Revival
Thoroughly Modern Millie

Cast in the role of Millie Dillmount for the Encores! production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, **Ashley Park** speaks about what she most hopes to explore in creating a new Millie. Step inside the process with **Lear deBessonnet** (Director), **Clint Ramos**, **Lauren Yee** (Creative Consultant), **Camille A. Brown** (Choreographer), **Durra Leung** (Cantonese Lyricist), and authors **Jeanine Tesori** and **Dick Scanlan**. Learn what inspired Brown's new choreography as she walks audiences through the iconic dance break from "Forget About the Boy" and the actual audition sequence.

Encores! Inside the Revival
Connection through Iconic American Musicals

Mayor La Guardia founded New York City Center for the people of New York to experience the best of music, theater, and dance. While Encores! usually revives lesser known musicals, the series will usher in a new annual



tradition in the spirit of La Guardia’s accessible invitation, whereby the performance of a classic title will celebrate the way musical theater connects us all.

All Encores! Inside the Revival episodes will be streamed for free on City Center’s YouTube page and website at NYCityCenter.org. Programming and casting subject to change. New York City Center is located at 131 West 55th Street between 6th and 7th Avenues. For information call 212.581.1212 or visit NYCityCenter.org.

Leadership Support for Encores! is made possible by the Stacey and Eric Mindich Fund for Musical Theater. Major Support for New York City Center is provided by the Ford Foundation, the Howard Gilman Foundation and the Jerome L. Greene Foundation. Encores! Season Sponsors include Roz and Jerry Meyer, The Shubert Foundation, and the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for Encores! Additional support for Encores! is provided by Marta Heflin Foundation, The Kaplen Brothers Fund, The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, The Frederick Loewe Foundation, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc., The SHS Foundation, and The Ted Snowdon Foundation.

Camille A. Brown (Encores! Creative Advisor) is an award-winning choreographer. As Choreographer, Broadway: *Choir Boy* (Tony nomination), *Once on This Island* – Revival, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Tours: *Once on This Island* (National Tour); Off-Broadway: *Toni Stone*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *This Ain’t No Disco*, *Bella: An American Tall Tale*, *Fortress of Solitude*, *For Colored Girls...When the Rainbow is Enuf*. City Center: *Cabin in the Sky* (Encores!) and *tick, tick...BOOM!* (Encores! Off-Center) starring Lin-Manuel Miranda. Opera: *Porgy & Bess* (Metropolitan Opera); Film: *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* (Netflix) starring Viola Davis and Denzel Washington. Television: *Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert* (NBC) starring John Legend and Sara Bareilles, *New Year’s Eve in Rockefeller Center* (NBC) with John Legend. She is the artistic director of Camille A. Brown & Dancers. Her work has been commissioned by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (*City of Rain*, City Center 2019), Complexions, Philadanco!, and Urban Bush Women, among others. Her work has also appeared at the 2007 Fall for Dance Festival. She recently won the Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Choreography.

Eisa Davis (Encores! Creative Advisor) is an actor, writer, and performer working on stage and screen. A 2020 Creative Capital Awardee, Herb Alpert Award recipient, Cave Canem fellow, and Obie Award winner for Sustained Excellence in Performance, Davis was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for her play *Bulrusher* and wrote and starred in the stage memoir *Angela’s Mixtape*. Other work includes *The Essentialisn’t*, *Ramp* (Ruby Prize winner), *The History of Light* (Barrymore nomination), *Paper Armor*, *Umkovu*, *Six Minutes*, *Warriors Don’t Cry*, *Mushroom*, *||: Girls :||: Chance :||: Music :||* and the collaborations *Active Ingredients* and *Hip Hop Anansi*. She wrote for both seasons of the Spike Lee Netflix series *She’s Gotta Have It*, penned the narration for Cirque du Soleil’s first ice show *Crystal*, and has released two albums of music. She is the executive producer and writer of a Little Rock Nine limited series spearheaded by Seth MacFarlane’s Fuzzy Door, UCP, and the late Chadwick Boseman.

Juan L. Espinal (Filmmaker, Encores! Inside the Revival), born and raised in the Dominican Republic, is a director and editor based in New York City for the past nine years. His filmography stretches from documentaries to branded content, fictional narratives, and music videos. He has worked with Grammy Award-winning artists, presidential candidates, and Oscar-nominated actors, most recently winning a Webby for a mini-documentary produced by Remezcla.



Jenny Gersten (Producer of Musical Theater) is an award-winning producer whose work spans non-profit institutions and commercial theater. Recent credits include *Beetlejuice*, the Off-Broadway immersive revival of *Sweeney Todd*, and the forthcoming Perelman Center downtown. She served as artistic director of Williamstown Theatre Festival, associate producer of The Public Theater and executive director of Friends of the High Line. At sea, she's the creative producer for Virgin Voyages.

Kenny Leon (Director, Encores! *The Tap Dance Kid*) is a Tony and Obie Award-winning and Emmy-nominated Broadway and television director. Most recently he directed the Broadway premiere of Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize winning masterpiece, *A Soldier's Play*. Broadway credits include *American Son*; *Children of a Lesser God*; *Holler If Ya Hear Me*; *A Raisin in the Sun* (Tony Award); August Wilson's *Fences*, *Gem of the Ocean*, and *Radio Golf*. TV: *American Son*, *Hairspray Live!*, *The Wiz Live!*, and more.

Robert O'Hara (Encores! Creative Advisor) has received the NAACP's Best Play and Best Director award and is also the winner of two Obie Awards. He made his Broadway directorial debut with Jeremy O. Harris's acclaimed *Slave Play*, and has directed Nikkole Salter and Dania Guiria's *In the Continuum*, Tarell McCraney's *The Brother/Sister Plays (Part 2)*, and Kirsten Child's *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin* for City Center Encores! Off-Center, among many others. As a playwright, his own works include *Mankind*, *Bootycandy*, *Insurrection: Holding History*, *Zombie: The American* and *Barbecue*. His recent directing projects include, Baum and Cheri's *Gun and Powder* at Signature Theatre, Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* at Williamstown Theater Festival, Aziza Barnes's *BLKS* at MCC, Inda Craig-Galvan's *Black Superhero Magic Mama* at the Geffen Playhouse theater, the Universes' *Uni/Son*, inspired by the poetry of August Wilson at OSF, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at Denver Center for the Performing Arts.

Billy Porter (Adapter/Director, Encores! *The Life*) is an award-winning actor, singer, director, composer, and playwright. He recently won the Emmy Award for Lead Actor for his appearance in FX's Emmy and Golden Globe nominated drama *Pose*. A Hollywood Walk of Fame inductee, Porter has numerous theater credits, including the role of Lola in *Kinky Boots* (Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle awards; Grammy for best musical theater album). He can next be seen in the third season of FX's *Pose*, voicing Audrey II in Greg Berlanti's remake of *Little Shop of Horrors*, as well as the highly anticipated *Cinderella* remake in 2021.

Clint Ramos (Encores! Producing Creative Director) is an Obie, Drama Desk, Lortel, and Tony Award-winning theater and film designer and activist, whose recent Broadway credits include *Slave Play*, *Once on This Island*, *Torch Song*, *Grand Horizons*, *Eclipsed*, and many more. He designed the films *Lingua Franca*, which prized at the Venice Film Festival and is out on Netflix and *Respect* with Jennifer Hudson for MGM. As principal costume designer for Encores! Off-Center, he has designed 23 shows for City Center including *Violet* and *The Wild Party* with Sutton Foster, *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Little Shop of Horrors* with Jake Gyllenhaal, *A New Brain* with Jonathan Groff, Randy Newman's *Faust* and *tick, tick...Boom!* with Lin Manuel Miranda. Ramos serves on the advisory board of the American Theatre Wing and is the Head of Design and Production at Fordham University.

NEW YORK CITY CENTER (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. The distinctive neo-Moorish theater welcomes over 300,000 annual visitors to experience internationally acclaimed artists on the same stage where legends like George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, and Barbara Cook made their mark. Its landmark 75th Anniversary Season (2018 – 2019) paid tribute to this rich history and celebrated the institution's singular role in the arts today. City Center's Tony-honored Encores!



series has celebrated the tradition of American musical theater for over 25 years. In 2013, City Center launched the Encores! Off-Center series, which brings today's innovative artists into contact with groundbreaking musicals from the more recent past. Dance has also been integral to the theater's mission from the start and programs like the annual Fall for Dance Festival, with all tickets \$15, remain central to City Center's identity. Home to a roster of renowned national and international companies including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (City Center's Principal Dance Company) and Manhattan Theatre Club, New York City Center is Manhattan's first performing arts center, founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with the mission of making the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. That mission continues today through its dynamic programming, art exhibitions, studio events, and master classes, which are complemented by education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to over 11,000 New York City students, teachers, and families each year. NYCityCenter.org

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