
LINCOLN CENTER PRESENTS

PASSING THE CROWN FEATURING MC LYTE

OCTOBER 12, 2025 AT 7:30PM

WU TSAI THEATER
DAVID GEFFEN HALL
90 minutes without intermission

CREATIVE TEAM

Creator, Executive Producer & Orchestrator Juliette Jones
Associate Producer & Orchestrator Monique Brooks Roberts
Creative Director & Choreographer Randi "Rascal" Freitas
Associate Choreographer Ruthie Fantaye
Music Director & Programming Elise Russell Gibson
Pre-Production & Playback Aaron Daniels

FEATURED ARTISTS

Featured Guest Artist MC Lyte
Special Guest Artist Rapsody
Opening & Guest/Resident DJ DJ Perly

Dancers

Randi "Rascal" Freitas
Lilian "LilyBreeze" Ortega
Ruthie Fantaye
Kiana Davalos
Brianna Luciano
Halima Dodo

Hajnal Pivnick
Tiffany Weiss

Viola
Kayla Williams
Lakshmi James

Strings

Violin
Juliette Jones
Monique Brooks Roberts
Frédérique Gnaman
Ina Paris

Cello
Angelique Montes
Susan Mandel

Horns

Trumpet
Julie Acosta

Tenor Trombone
Berta Moreno

Trombone
Naomi Cuellar

Band

Elise Russell Gibson, *Keys*
Rachel Francis, *Electric Guitar*
Zuri Appleby, *Electric Bass*
Amber "Lunar R-A-E" Baker, *Drums*
Riza Printup, *Harp*
Lindsay Niccs, *Background Vocals*

Host Lisa "L-boogie" Bauford

Horn Consultant Gina Benalcázar López

PTC Live Orchestral Mixtape Contributors DJ Reborn, DJ Cyn

Production Monét Thibou, *Production Stage Manager*, Mextly Couzin, *Lighting Designer*
Kaileykielle Hoga, *FOH Advisor*, Lyla Brooks Roberts, *Intern*

AnsariSaxon Productions

Tour Manager Mercedes Wilson

Tour Manager Naila Ansari Carbonell Catilo

ARTIST NOTE

Passing the Crown was born from my desire to honor the women who built and continue to shape hip-hop while reimagining their stories through orchestration, dance, fashion, and DJ culture. I'm an '80s kid who grew up on '90s hip-hop, so I have a visceral memory of hearing MC Lyte, Salt-N-Pepa, Missy Elliott, Ms. Lauryn Hill, Foxy Brown, and Lil Kim for the first time. It felt revelatory. Their rhythm, wit, and power awakened me as a musician, a woman, and a fan of storytelling culture. And growing up, I was surrounded by women who innovated and made space for creativity in ways that often went uncelebrated. *Passing the Crown* is my way of honoring that lineage, stepping into the same spirit of creativity and joy, and sharing it with audiences through music, dance, and community.

I was so honored to have not only received a commission to create *Passing the Crown*, but for it to receive its world premiere right here at Lincoln Center's 2024 *Summer for the City* festival, in the city where hip-hop was born. Returning here tonight is both a celebration and homecoming!

That first performance set the tone for everything that followed (and continues). We curated an all-female and gender-expansive collective of musicians and dancers to reimagine the canon of some of New York's hip-hop classics, in what my dear friend and brother DJ Raydar Ellis coined, our "live orchestral mixtape." The energy on stage was palpable, the joy infectious, and the sense of family and solidarity undeniable. That night, I realized *Passing the Crown* was more than a concert—it was a living dialogue between generations of women in the arts, a celebration of artistry, and a call to embrace creativity boldly and collectively.

This summer, we brought the production to Denver for our West Coast premiere with GRAMMY-award winning artist Rapsody. Working with her was life-changing. She is the kind of artist who, in her own words, "hopes to leave you better than she found you," and that she does. Through her lyricism and activism, she holds a mirror to love, justice, and joy.

Returning to Lincoln Center this fall with MC Lyte is a dream come true. She is not only one of hip-hop's legendary queens, but also an artist whose work shaped the very culture we celebrate in *Passing the Crown*. I remember exactly where I was when I first heard "Cold Rock a Party." Almost 30 years later, I feel the same energy every time and remain inspired by how Lyte continues to pave an indelible pathway.

I am deeply grateful to work closely with our Associate Producer Monique Brooks Roberts, also co-orchestrator and violinist, and our creative director and Emmy Award-winning choreographer, Randi "Rascal" Freitas, who also performs as a B-girl.

Their artistry, leadership, and vision are central to the production's execution and cultural resonance. Monique's melodic sensibility and intuitive direction bring cohesion and emotional depth to every performance, while Randi's choreography, precision, and presence electrify the stage. Together, we nurture an environment of trust, joy, and family that is felt from the rehearsal to the performance.

Passing the Crown's visual identity and style are elevated by the legendary April Walker of Walker Wear and her *The Future Been Female* imprint. A pioneer in streetwear, April has dressed icons from Queen Latifah to Tupac to Run-DMC. As the first woman to pioneer an urban fashion brand, April opened doors to shape fashion while leveling the playing field. Walker Wear stands on the pillars of community, culture, collaboration, and social equity. Her visionary approach amplifies the production's celebration of empowerment, innovation, and legacy. Her designs underscore the show's ethos: creativity, authenticity, and unapologetic expression.

As a New Yorker, I'm proud to welcome DJ Perly, 2X DMC USA Champion, Heavy Hitter DJ and "Undisputed Queen of the 1's & 2's" (Grandmaster Caz and Melle Mel). She opens the night with an electrifying set and then joins *Passing the Crown's* live orchestral mixtape as our guest/resident DJ. Together, this performance represents both continuity and growth: orchestration, breaking, DJing, and dance remain the foundation, while the production has expanded, refined, and deepened through collaboration and the love of every artist involved.

For me, *Passing the Crown* is more than a show—it's an ongoing conversation about legacy and empowerment. Every performance is an opportunity to honor the women who came before us, celebrate the artists shaping culture today, and inspire the next generation of women to step boldly into their creative power. Returning to Lincoln Center feels like coming full circle: the crown is not only passed, it is celebrated, elevated, and shared with everyone in the room. Looking ahead, I'm excited for *Passing the Crown* to continue to grow, reach new audiences, and ignite the spark of possibility for every young woman and artist who sees themselves reflected on stage. My aspiration is that this project not only entertains, but also emboldens, educates, and energizes communities to embrace their own creative voices.

— Juliette Jones, *Creator and Executive Producer*

MEET THE ARTISTS



MC LYTE

One of the most prolific and well-respected female hip-hop artists of all time, MC Lyte is also a lyricist, inspirational speaker, DJ, pioneer, icon, veteran, and entrepreneur. She was the first woman to perform hip-hop in the White House and the first African American woman to serve as the President of the Los Angeles chapter of the Recording Academy, the organization that bestows the GRAMMY Awards. She has consistently found ways to reinvent herself

musically, while expanding her resume and gaining new fans. MC Lyte is the first rap artist ever to perform at New York's historic Carnegie Hall, the first female rapper to ever receive a gold single, and the first female solo rapper ever nominated for a GRAMMY. MC Lyte has graced network television and the big screen, and she has been the voice behind the VHI Hip-Hop Honors and national campaigns for Wherehouse Music, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and Nike. The artist has had recurring roles in *Half & Half*, *For Your Love*, *SWAT* and *Queen of the South*, and in 2019, she landed a role as detective in the reboot of *New York Undercover*. She appeared in the blockbuster film *Girls Trip*, as well as the films *Patti Cakes*, *Loved to Death*, *Bad Hair*, and *Sylvie*. A role model to women and respected widely, MC Lyte enjoys traveling across the nation to use her expertise and story of success to motivate others. A published author, she provides keynote addresses at educational institutions, community centers, and corporations around the globe and has also been active in many social projects, including anti-violence campaigns, HIV/AIDs prevention, and Rock the Vote.

www.mclyte.biz



PHOTO CREDIT: ANTHONY GRETZKY WOLF

RAPSODY

On her fourth studio album, *Please Don't Cry*, Rapsody weaves together disparate experiences to create a truly unique and unforgettable sonic gem. It explores the depth of her technical dexterity with more vulnerability than prior releases, marking a new chapter in her already influential career. Known as a wordsmith and a truth-teller, Rapsody's journey began with *The Idea of Beautiful* (2012), followed by such pivotal

moments as her guest verse on Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly* (2015), which earned the artist her first GRAMMY nomination. She was invited to the White House by President Barack Obama for a roundtable on Justice Reform, and she made waves with *Laila's Wisdom* (2017) which received two GRAMMY nominations, before being celebrated for *Eve* (2019), a groundbreaking tribute to Black women. In 2020, she continued to gain recognition, being named Lyricist of the Year at the BET Hip-Hop Awards and appearing on *EBONY*'s Power 100 in 2021. XXL named her one of the 20 Greatest Female Rappers of All Time, and Dr. Dre crowned Rap his "favorite female emcee." By 2024, Rapsody's growth as an artist was evident in *Please Don't Cry*, which featured collaborations with Erykah Badu, Lil Wayne, Phylicia Rashad, Alex Isley, and Baby Tate, to name a few. The 22-track album, with its deeply personal and reflective narrative, provided an intimate look into Rapsody's journey of embracing new beginnings and her imperfections. Her career has reached a new pinnacle with her first GRAMMY win for *3AM*, further solidifying her place as one of hip-hop's greatest storytellers.

PHOTO CREDIT: DERRICK DENAYO



DJ PERLY

DJ Perly is a highly respected Puerto Rican, Bronx-born DJ, turntablist, and producer from New York City. She is known for her dynamic performances that showcase her deep musical knowledge and ability to manipulate music with precision and flair. Perly has competed in over 20 DJ battles, and she gained widespread recognition in 2017, making history by becoming the first woman to win the DMC US Finals DJ Battle. In 2022, she became the first and only

woman to win two DMC USA National titles. She has performed at various prestigious venues, from Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center to the KoKo in London, showcasing her ability to mix and scratch her way to rocking a crowd with precision and creativity. Throughout her career, DJ Perly has performed alongside legendary DJs like DJ Jazzy Jeff, Skratch Bastid, Tony Touch, Stretch Armstrong and Bobbito, Natasha Diggs, DJ Doo Wop, and Africa Bambaataa, among others. She has also opened for influential legendary acts such as LL Cool J, Royal Machines, Gorilla Nems, De La Soul, Monie Love, Grand Wizzard Theodore, INVISIBLE SKRATCH PIKLZ, and The X-Ecutioners. Perly's DJ skills have been featured in brand campaigns for Jeep and Levi's, episodes of HBO Max's *The Flight Attendant*, and the 2023 Webby Awards After-party. Her guest mixes have been highlighted on Shade 45 and Sirius XM Fly radio shows. Perly continues to be an active and influential figure within the DJ community, performing at events, promoting inclusivity, diversity, and representation and contributing to DJ culture worldwide. Her influential impact extends far beyond her achievements, making her an undeniable, trailblazing pioneer and role model in the music community.

MEET THE PRODUCERS



JULIETTE JONES

Juliette Jones is a violinist, composer, and creative force reshaping the orchestral landscape—and the founder of Wondersmith Entertainment, a Black woman-owned music agency where artistic excellence meets cultural impact. With a career spanning GRAMMY, Oscar, and Emmy-recognized projects, Juliette brings genre-bending fluency and a bold curatorial voice to every stage she touches. She has performed and recorded with artists including

Beyoncé, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Cynthia Erivo, Jon Batiste, Stevie Wonder, Janelle Monáe, and Solange, while contracting for major institutions such as Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, the Hollywood Bowl, and the Kimmel Center. Her selected credits include *Jesus Christ Superstar: Live*, *The Color Purple* (2023), *Mudbound*, and the People's Choice Awards, with scoring work featured in campaigns for Apple and Samsung. As Founder and Creative Director of Wondersmith Entertainment—formerly Rootstock Republic—Juliette leads a team dedicated to producing custom, community-centered projects rooted in equity and innovation. Since 2014, Wondersmith has employed over 2,500 musicians and partnered with artists across genres to create immersive live shows, orchestral recordings, and multimedia installations that challenge traditional norms and uplift historically excluded voices. Over the past decade, Wondersmith has collaborated with a celebrated roster of over 100 artists, including John Legend, Aretha Franklin, Babyface, H.E.R., Common, Jennifer Hudson, Aloe Blacc, Ms. Lauryn Hill, Jacqueline Woodson, and DJ D-Nice. Her latest work, *Passing the Crown*, is a live orchestral mixtape celebrating the legacy and future of women in Hip-Hop through orchestra, dance, and DJ. After its successful world premiere at Lincoln Center in 2024, the production returns in the 25/26 season featuring hip hop icon and pioneer MC Lyte, as well as GRAMMY Award-winning artist Rapsody. Juliette's original works have been commissioned by Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and are supported by major artist fellowships, including the 2025 Strokes of Genius Fellowship from The Black Genius Foundation. Juliette is also a newly elected member of the Recording Academy, where she joins a global network of creators helping to shape the future of the music industry. Through her artistry, leadership, and vision, she is not only creating work—she's building legacy.



MONIQUE BROOKS ROBERTS

Monique Brooks Roberts is a violinist, composer, and arranger originally from Louisville, KY, and has established herself as a powerful voice in the soul and jazz fusion circuit with her sultry, soulful violin sound. She has built a dynamic and fulfilling career, performing and recording with world-renowned artists including Christina Aguilera, Lizzo, Alicia Keys, Common, Jill Scott, Mos Def, Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, J. Cole, Shawn Mendes, Mumu Fresh, and many more.

She was a touring member of the Philadelphia String Quartet for seven years and has also performed with ensembles such as the Soulful Symphony Orchestra, Gateways Festival Orchestra, Harlem Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonic of Southern New Jersey (where she served as Principal Second Violin), and the Color of Noize Orchestra under the direction of Derrick Hodge. Her artistry has been featured on national and international stages, including live television appearances on the Grammy Awards, VHI Storytellers, NPR's Tiny Desk, CBS's *Late Show with David Letterman*, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, MTV Video Music Awards, and BET Honors. She has also performed at iconic venues such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Radio City Music Hall, The Kimmel Center, the Hollywood Bowl, Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, The Theater at Madison Square Garden, Newport Jazz Festival, and The Willingboro Jazz Festival. Currently, Monique performs with *Passing the Crown*—serving as co-orchestrator, associate producer, and performer—alongside Camille A. Brown & Dancers, Toshi Reagon, and as a solo artist. In 2020, she released her debut album *Free*, which charted at #12 on the iTunes Soul charts, further solidifying her voice as a unique and powerful force blending classical training with soulful expression.



RANDI "RASCAL" FREITAS

Randi "Rascal" Freitas is a versatile dancer, choreographer, and master educator based in Los Angeles, CA. With a valued presence in both the industry and the community, Randi's talent is influential and sought after in multiple arenas within the dance world. Randi has performed with artists such as Justin Timberlake, SZA, Travis Scott, Karol G, and Kaytranada, and she can be seen in commercials for AT&T and Toyota.

She has performed on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, *The Late Late Show with James Corden*, *The Ellen Show*, The American Music Awards, The Kid's Choice Awards, The Grammys, and more. "Rascal" Randi toured the nation as Associate Director/Choreographer of the Emmy Award-winning theater show *The Hip Hop Nutcracker*, toured Japan with the breaking theater show *The Battle*, and recently wrapped filming on *Spirited*, Apple's newest musical starring Will Ferrell and Ryan Reynolds, and the Disney+ *The Hip-Hop Nutcracker* holiday film. In the underground scene, Randi is still active and was not only the 2021 RedBull BC One Boston Winner, but was also a 2021 RedBull BC One US National Finalist. Recently she placed as a Bronze Metalist in both the Arizona and Los Angeles Open Regional Olympic Qualifiers, and ranked fifth in the nation. As an educator, Randi has taught hip-hop at the University of Southern California and CalArts, has taught throughout the US, and internationally in France, Belgium, Canada, Thailand, Bahrain, and Mexico. In addition to her work in the industry, community, and institutions, she is currently in partnership with NIKE as a consultant for branding and specialty shoe building. Randi most recently is the Founder and Director of OMEGA Flow Floorwork, a training program, company, and curriculum for dancers worldwide. While her training program is not exclusive to women and the LGBTQ+ community, it stands as a space of integrity for them to learn and grow. Randi's latest endeavor is as Creator of Dancers' U, a comprehensive training that transcends the dance floor, arming participants with the financial, strategic, and creative skills essential to navigate the professional dance world successfully.

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