LOUIE ANDERSON DEAR DAD

Written and Performed by Louie Anderson

Directed by Abraham Geisness

@THESTRAND



FROM THE ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the first show of 2018 at The Strand! The space you're sitting in opened three years ago as the next major artistic incubator for San Francisco. At The Strand, your presence is a part of the creation. Whether we use this stage to introduce you to our fearless M.F.A. Program students, to inspire solo performers like Bill Irwin, Colin Quinn, or Martin Moran to experiment with new work in creative ways, or to rock out to the incredible music of *The Unfortunates*, The Strand is about looking forward and testing the boundaries of risky, exciting new performance. Last season, we created the @TheStrand series to host these artistic adventures and complement our mainstage offerings, while inviting a new generation of audiences into our most intimate venue.

When we heard that Louie Anderson was looking for a home to develop a live adaptation of his best-selling memoir *Dear Dad*, we knew that The Strand was the perfect home. The opportunity to watch a comedy icon sculpt a unique performance from scratch—up close and in real time—is the rarest of experiences and hard to forget. Witnessing artists like Louie take big swings and shape ideas only inches away makes you an essential partner from the work's very beginning.

Next up onstage is an action-packed and hip-hop-infused production of Qui Nguyen's critically acclaimed *Vietgone*, another new work making its San Francisco debut. Qui's play is a brilliant mash-up of comedic and musical styles that reimagines the true story of how his parents met and fell in love after the Vietnam War. It's an electric, singular, laugh-out-loud creation from one of our country's leading new voices, and I hope you'll come back to collaborate with us on this all-new production.

Happy New Year and enjoy Dear Dad!

Andy Donald Associate Artistic Director

A.C.T.

Carey Perloff, Artistic Director Peter Pastreich, Executive Director

presents

LOUIE ANDERSON: *DEAR DAD*

Written & Performed by

Directed by

Louie Anderson: Dear Dad runs 90 minutes with no intermission.

ARTIST BIOS



LOUIE ANDERSON (author and performer) is a three-time Emmy Award-winning actor, bestselling author, and legendary comedian. Named by Comedy Central as one of the "100 Greatest Stand-Up Comedians of All Time," his career has spanned more than 30 years. His television series *Life with Louie* won three Humanitas Prizes for an animated series. Anderson won his third Emmy Award in 2016 for his role on the hit FX

comedy *Baskets*. He recently completed his sixth comedy special, *Big Underwear*, which premieres in 2018. His best-selling books include *Dear Dad*: *Letters From An Adult Child*, *Goodbye Jumbo* . . . *Hello Cruel World*, and *The F Word*, *How To Survive Your Family*. His most recent book *Hey Mom* (April 2018 Simon and Schuster) combines wry wit and poignant humor, while sharing his journey of turning life's challenges into joy as well as plenty of wisdom he's gained from his late mother.

Special Thanks: A special thank you to my manager Ahmos Hassan, and to Leah Hamos from The Gersh Agency and Nicole Favale from Chariot Management.

ABRAHAM GEISNESS (director) is a writer, producer, and director who has worked with Buried Treasure Entertainment since 2003. He studied theater at the University of Minnesota before joining creative forces with Louie Anderson in 1999. Geisness has collaborated on many projects with Anderson, including producing the last three of the stand-up's television comedy specials. Together they created the stage adaptation of Anderson's *New York Times*-best seller *Dear Dad.* Geisness has also worked with major networks to create new content for television, and worked with established brands to provide media exposure.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LOUIE ANDERSON

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A SMILE AND A NISSION AN INTERVIEW WITH LOUIE ANDERSON BY SIMON HODGSON

In the early 1980s, stand-up comedian Louie Anderson took a friend to the graveyard in Duluth, Minnesota. The man wanted to read a letter to his late father, a man with whom he'd experienced a challenging relationship all his life. "When my friend came back to the car," Anderson says, "he looked different lighter. I thought: I'm gonna have to do that someday." The Minneapolisborn comedian was already a star, known both for his stand-up and his scene-stealing appearances in '80s movies such as *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Coming to America*. Anderson went back to comedy, but he didn't forget the experience in Duluth and, later in the decade, he started writing his own letter.

How did Dear Dad start out?

Originally this began as a celebrity autobiography. But in the middle of it, I began journaling about my dad. I just started writing a letter, "Dear Dad." A writer I knew at *People* magazine was doing an article about the adult children of alcoholics. When he asked me if I had anything, I sent him the journal. He printed a couple of the letters and that's when I realized that *this* is the book I wanted to write.

What was the response from people who read the book?

Ten thousand letters. Unbelievable. It was overwhelming. I felt very sad for these people, but I'm glad that the book gave them some feeling of solace, like someone else out there cared or went through it too. I even got a letter from my nephew about his father—my brother, who was an alcoholic—and that was super powerful. The letters were a tapestry of stories that criscrossed my own. People still come up to me and say—I read your book and it changed my relationship with my father.

Dear Dad at The Strand will see you take on a totally different medium. What's that journey been like?

It's hard because I'm a natural performer, so I'm looking for a response from the audience. But in this show, I'm not looking for an audible response. That is a different thing. My biggest challenge is where to put comedy and where to put serious stuff, and where to put a mix of the two. To be more of an actor and less of a comic.

How does it feel coming to San Francisco to present this show?

There's a hopefulness I've always felt in San Francisco. L.A. is its own thing—it's Hollywood. Then you have the middle of California, pretty conservative. And then you have San Francisco. It's a big melting pot of people, a beacon calling everything toward it. It's the Statue of Liberty of the West. San Francisco has a real consciousness. What they want is the best of the best, but not at anyone else's expense.

Right now, *Dear Dad* is a work in progress. What are your hopes for it?

It's the afterword of the book. When I wrote that book I was much younger, much less experienced. Now I'm at another level of understanding my dad and myself. I've lived a lot. I've found the value and the meaning of "father." I would give anything if he was alive today, so that I could say—what the hell were you thinking, and what the hell was I thinking.

I'd like this show to go more places. I'd like to go to Broadway with something entertaining and full of grace. Let's just go all the way. I'd like to get the Tony. [*laughs*] *Dear Dad* is an important milestone in my career and a personal milestone. I'd like to shine the brightest light I can on its journey. Nothing would make me happier than to spend a year doing *Dear Dad*, whether in San Francisco or on Broadway. Hopefully people will walk out of the show with a smile and also a mission to examine their relationship with their own father.

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