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## LITTLE ISLAND

ANNOUNCES COMPLETE CAST & CREATIVE TEAM FOR

### “THE MANHATTAN VARIATIONS”

CREATED BY **CHRIS THILE** AND **CLAIRE COFFEE**

MUSIC AND LYRIS BY CHRIS THILE

BOOK BY CHRIS THILE AND CLAIRE COFFEE

PRESENTED FROM AUGUST 14-18

AS PART OF ITS CURRENT SUMMER SEASON

**New York, NY** (August 12, 2024) – **Little Island** is pleased to present the musical memoir *The Manhattan Variations* created by **Chris Thile** and **Claire Coffee** next week from Wednesday, August 14 through Sunday, August 18 in Little Island’s 700-seat Amph, with an official opening night on Thursday, August 15.

Created by Chris Thile and Claire Coffee and performed by Thile, *The Manhattan Variations* is a musical memoir that revolves around the legendary Lower East Side cocktail bar **Milk & Honey**. With a tapestry of music and stories, Thile recalls his younger self – a hungry artist, fresh to New York– searching for a drink and finding instead something more like home behind Milk & Honey’s velvet curtain. Throughout the original score by Thile, his quintessentially intricate mandolin work recalls the delicacy and precision with which a great cocktail is made.

The production’s creative team includes **Krit Robinson** (scenic design) **Mary Ellen Stebbins** (lighting design), **Shannon Slaton** (sound design), and **Betsy Ayer** (production stage manager).

To download headshots for *The Manhattan Variations*, please click [here](#).

Running simultaneously at Little Island’s 200-seat The Glade is **Language City**, a multimedia performance about the past, present, and future of the world’s most linguistically diverse city, featuring speakers of endangered, Indigenous, and minority languages. With text based on the linguist Ross Perlin’s book of the same name, the performance is a collaboration between Perlin and **Daniel Kaufman’s Endangered Language Alliance**, **Michael Leibenluft**, **Gung Ho Projects** and directed by Leibenluft. The performance features **Tenzin Donsel**, **Julia Gu**, **Kewulay Kamara**, **Malcolm Opoku**, **Shubhra Prakash**, **Irwin Sánchez**, and **Dmitris Stefanidis**.

The production’s creative team includes **Karen Boyer** (costume design), **Megumi Katayama** (sound design), **Cinthia Chen** (video design), and **Josh Bloom** (production stage manager)

Little Island recently announced that an annual, four-month-long summer season of world premieres, which kicked off on June 1, will feature a total of nine newly commissioned pieces. Little Island’s new arts program moves towards the future with a commitment to a multi-year roster of original work, all commissioned by and developed at Little Island. Bookended by the premiere of choreographer **Twyla Tharp’s** newest work *How Long Blues* and a 90-minute remix of Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* in which outré opera diva **Anthony Roth Costanzo** sings every leading

role, the season will offer premieres of varying scales across all areas of performance – including music, dance, theater, opera, comedy, jazz, pop, and funk, all outdoors and directly sited on the Hudson River at 14<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City. The Amph, the park's 700-seat amphitheater, will house larger scale performances at a \$25 ticket price, while The Glade, the park's 200-seat venue, will be home to more intimate works, all of which will be completely free to the public.

**KEY ART FOR SUMMER SEASON AVAILABLE [HERE](#)**

**IMAGE OF LITTLE ISLAND AVAILABLE [HERE](#)**

Tickets to Little Island's summer season of performances are available for purchase on [littleislandtickets.com](http://littleislandtickets.com), TodayTix.com, or by downloading the TodayTix app.

## CAST & CREATIVE BIOGRAPHIES

**Chris Thile** (*Creator/Performer*). Acclaimed Grammy Award-winning mandolinist, singer, songwriter, composer, and MacArthur Fellow recipient of the prestigious "Genius" grant, Chris Thile is a multifaceted musical talent, described by The Guardian as "that rare being: an all-round musician who can settle into any style, from bluegrass to classical," and hailed by NPR as a "genre-defying musical genius." Thile is a founding member of the highly influential string bands Punch Brothers and Nickel Creek, and has collaborated with countless luminaries from Yo-Yo Ma to Fiona Apple to Brad Mehldau. For four years, Thile hosted public radio favorite Live from Here with Chris Thile (formerly known as A Prairie Home Companion). With his broad outlook, Thile creates a distinctly American canon and a new musical aesthetic for performers and audiences alike, giving the listener "one joyous arc, with the linear melody and vertical harmony blurring into a single web of gossamer beauty" (New York Times). Over the last year, Thile has been touring with Nickel Creek in support of the critically acclaimed 2023 release *Celebrants*, and captivating audiences with a playfully ambitious biographical composition entitled *ATTENTION!* (a narrative song cycle for extroverted mandolinist and orchestra). Additionally, he has been focused on the production of a new musical variety show, "The Energy Curfew Music Hour." Created with Claire Coffee and featuring Punch Brothers, the series will be released on Audible later this year.

**Claire Coffee** (*Director*) is an actor, writer, director, and producer who logged her first professional theater credit at age 6 in the San Francisco Bay Area. As an actor, TV/Film highlights include starring roles on NBC's long running show *Grimm*, *The West Wing*, *S.W.A.T.*, *Law and Order*, and the short film *Blocks* (on which she also served as a producer), which premiered at Sundance and was optioned as a series for Showtime. As a director, Claire helmed the comedy and spoken word portion of APM's radio show "Live From Here" for two seasons and produced and directed Chris Thile's full length narrative orchestral piece "Attention!", which has been performed with The Knights, the LA Phil, the National Symphony Orchestra and the Louisville Orchestra. Most recently, she co-created and directed Audible's upcoming variety show "The Energy Curfew Music Hour" featuring Chris Thile and Punch Brothers. Claire graduated from Northwestern University's theater program and lives in upstate New York.

**Krit Robinson** (*Set Design*) is an award-winning designer, artist, and educator. Her work ranges from experimental opera to regional theatre and everything in between. Select design credits include: *Hilma* (Wilma Theatre), *Drinking in America* (Audible Theater), *Don Giovanni*, (Wolftrap Opera), Heather Christian's *Oratorio for Living Things* (Ars Nova), *graveyard shift* (Goodman Theatre), *Familiar* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *In the Green* (LCT3). Krit is a founding member of Queens Lighting Collective, and co-lead designer on a outdoor temporary lighting installation through the Urban Design Forum for the Sunnyside Queens. Assistant Professor of Scenic Design at Purchase College, and A Princess Grace Fellow, she holds her MFA from Yale University and is

a proud member of USA 829. You can view her work at [kristenrobinsondesign.com](http://kristenrobinsondesign.com) Insta: @obstacle\_vessel & @queenslightingcollective

**Mary Ellen Stebbins** (*Lighting Design*). Collaborations include work with MCC Theater, Primary Stages, Opera Philadelphia, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, as well as Theresa Rebeck, Clare Barron, A\$AP Rocky, and AMOC\*. Mary Ellen is a 2020 Bessie Award Honoree and a 2016 Henry Hewes nominee. She is a 2019 Opera America Tobin Director-Designer Prize recipient, a 2014 Live Design Young Designer to Watch, the 2011 USITT Barbizon Lighting Design Award winner, and a 2009 Hangar Theater Lab Company Design Fellow. Mary Ellen holds an AB from Harvard University and an MFA from Boston University. She is a member of USA 829 and currently teaches at Carnegie Mellon School of Drama.

**Shannon Slaton** (*Sound Design*) on Broadway has designed *Melissa Etheridge: My Window* and *The Illusionists*. He has also designed more than fifty national tours including: *Shrek*, *The Producers*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *The Full Monty*, *A Chorus Line*, *Tap Dogs*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Shows he mixed on Broadway include: *Springsteen on Broadway*, *Cabaret*, *Annie*, *Anything Goes*, *Sweet Charity*, *Jersey Boys*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Spring Awakening*, *Fela!*, *Anything Goes*, *Annie*, *Legally Blonde*, and *Cabaret*.

**Betsy Ayer** (*Stage Manager*): Recent opera/ oratorio: *Erwartung*, *Adriana Mater*, San Francisco Symphony; *Number Our Days*, PAC NYC; *Emigré*, NY Philharmonic; *Perle Noire*, Dutch National Opera; *Shall We Gather At The River and Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)*, Park Avenue Armory; *Omar*, Spoleto USA; *Requiem*, the Shed; *Idomeneo*, Salzburg Festival, Glass *Handel*, Opera Philadelphia. Numerous productions at BAM and New York City Opera. Projects with AMOC\* include *El Niño – Nativity Reimagined*, *Eastman*, *El Cimarrón*, *Harawi*. Dance: Pam Tanowitz Dance, Trisha Brown Dance Company, New York City Ballet. Concerts: Interim Production Manager, Carnegie Hall. She is a graduate of Smith College.

## ABOUT LITTLE ISLAND

Little Island, the 2.4-acre park that sits along the Hudson River, opened in May 2021 and has since been enjoyed by 4.6 million visitors. In 2013, Barry Diller, in partnership with Hudson River Park Trust leadership, embarked on the unique opportunity to envision a solution for the repair and reactivation of Pier 54, which had been badly damaged by Hurricane Sandy. The park was designed as an entirely new type of public space for New York, one that would create an immersive experience of nature and art. Born from a collaboration of the UK-based Heatherwick Studio and the New York-based landscape architecture firm MNLA, led by Signe Nielsen, the park's imaginative design offers all New Yorkers and visitors a new public space that is dynamic, captivating, and restorative.

Little Island is operated year-round by a 50-member staff co-helmed by Producing Artistic Director **Zack Winokur** and Executive Director **Laura Clement**.

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