

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Acclaimed guitarist/vocalist John Pizzarelli celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his debut album with a collection of classic songs from Broadway and Hollywood**

***Stage & Screen*, due out April 21, 2023 via Palmetto Records, features songs spanning nearly a century, given new life by Pizzarelli, bassist Mike Karn and pianist Isaiah J. Thompson**

World-renowned guitarist and vocalist **John Pizzarelli** has dedicated many of his albums to the great songwriters and performers who have helped to establish the Great American Songbook and the pop music canon: Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Paul McCartney, Richard Rodgers, and Duke Ellington, to name a few. With his new album, Pizzarelli and his remarkable new trio cast a wider net to explore other sources for the most immortal songs of the past century: the Broadway stage and the silver screen.

Due out **April 21, 2023** via **Palmetto Records**, Pizzarelli's ***Stage & Screen*** finds inspiration in classic songs from Broadway musicals and Hollywood films. The cleverly chosen repertoire spans nearly nine decades, starting with a pair of songs from the 1925 musical *No, No, Nanette* ("I Want To Be Happy" and "Tea For Two") and leading into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with "I Love Betsy" from Jason Robert Brown's "Honeymoon in Vegas" – a stage musical based on the 1992 film. In between there are pieces by such iconic songwriters and composers as Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, Oscar Hammerstein II, Leonard Bernstein, Sammy Cahn, and Jule Styne, and songs immortalized in cinema favorites like *Casablanca*.

*Stage & Screen* also celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pizzarelli's 1983 debut recording, *I'm Hip (Please Don't Tell My Father)*. Over the ensuing four decades he's become one of the most acclaimed interpreters of classic and modern song and an influential advocate for the continuing evolution of the standards songbook. His albums have delved into that rich pool of song from a variety of angles, *Stage & Screen* providing an inviting new twist.

"In thinking about some of the songs that I really love to play, it struck me how many of them come from either a Broadway show or from a movie," Pizzarelli explains. "An idea like *Stage & Screen* frees me to explore a wide range of songwriters and eras, and it continues to offer a wealth of new possibilities."

He's joined for the occasion by his new trio featuring bassist **Mike Karn** and pianist **Isaiah J. Thompson**, two tremendous talents with whom Pizzarelli quickly discovered a scintillating chemistry, even with a two-year disruption to their touring schedule. While Karn has been working with Pizzarelli for the last seven years, Thompson joined the trio only three years ago, in late December 2019. A few months later his tenure was interrupted by the pandemic, only for the band to pick up again in August 2021. *Stage & Screen* was recorded a few short months later, but the band sounds like it's logged years on the road.

"This is a great little group, and I can go to a lot of different places with Mike and Isaiah," Pizzarelli raves. He was in the market for a new bassist in 2015, while thinking about a return to small group playing and, in particular, a drumless trio. He asked two friends, trombonist John Mosca and saxophonist Harry Allen, for recommendations. The one name common to both lists was Mike Karn.

Pizzarelli met Thompson even earlier, in 2013 when the pianist was just 16 years old. The guitarist was hosting a film and performance series at the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville, New York (in whose studio *Stage & Screen* was recorded), accompanied by students from Jazz House Kids, the non-

profit organization founded by Melissa Walker and Christian McBride. Young Thompson made an impact even then, and when Pizzarelli asked McBride to recommend a pianist and saw Thompson's name among the possibilities, he recalled that first impression. "I always joke that I would have hired him right away, but he had to go to the prom first," Pizzarelli laughs.

*Stage & Screen* opens with a sparkling take on "Too Close for Comfort," a song from the 1956 musical *Mr. Wonderful*. Pizzarelli became reacquainted with the tune while watching video of his father, the late guitar great Bucky Pizzarelli, perform it with saxophonist Zoot Sims. Jason Robert Brown gave his blessing for Pizzarelli to edit "I Love Betsy" into a concise three-verse list song, while he restored the seldom-sung verse to "As Time Goes By," indelibly associated with *Casablanca*. For Pizzarelli, the song also evokes a memory of performing it at the Algonquin Hotel in 1991 before a crowd that included Tony Bennett – from whose recording he had learned that verse in the first place. "He looked at me and nodded his head like, 'Keep going, kid,'" Pizzarelli recalls.

"I Want To Be Happy" is performed as a blazing instrumental showcasing Pizzarelli's agile seven-string prowess, while several pieces from the classic Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma!* are compiled into a stunning suite. "Tea For Two" is atypically rendered as a gentle ballad, inspired by Blossom Dearie's memorable version. The urgent "Just in Time" is drawn from 1956's *Bells Are Ringing*, the haunting "Some Other Time" – a solo guitar spotlight for Pizzarelli – from Bernstein's *On the Town*.

Much of the album's repertoire was inspired by Pizzarelli's weekly Thursday night livestream concerts on Facebook, including the unique *bossa nova* arrangement of "Where or When," from the 1937 Rodgers and Hart musical *Babes in Toyland*. One of the most oft-requested songs in that series was "Time After Time," which Frank Sinatra introduced in the 1947 MGM film *It Happened in Brooklyn*. The sprightly "You're All the World to Me" was penned for the 1951 movie musical *Royal Wedding*, starring Fred Astaire. The set closes with "Coffee in a Cardboard Cup," a Pizzarelli favorite from the little-known Kander and Ebb musical *70, Girls, 70*.

"The idea of taking these songs out of the context of their shows or movies was interesting to me," Pizzarelli says. "With a new arrangement you can change the meaning of a song. That's what we've been doing all of our lives as jazz musicians – trying to figure out how to make these classic songs different, whether it's a Songbook standard or a Beatles hit. It's always a lot of fun."

### **John Pizzarelli**

Guitarist and singer John Pizzarelli has been hailed by the Boston Globe for "reinvigorating the Great American Songbook and re-popularizing jazz." Established as one of the prime contemporary interpreters of the Great American Songbook, Pizzarelli has expanded that repertoire by including the music of Paul McCartney, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Tom Waits, Antônio Carlos Jobim and the Beatles. In addition to being a bandleader and solo performer, Pizzarelli has been a special guest on recordings for major pop names such as Natalie Cole, Kristin Chenoweth, Tom Wopat, Rickie Lee Jones and Dave Van Ronk, as well as leading jazz artists such as Rosemary Clooney, Ruby Braff, Johnny Frigo, Buddy DeFranco, Harry Allen and, of course, his father Bucky Pizzarelli. He won a Grammy Award in the Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album category as co-producer of James Taylor's *American Standard* in 2021. A radio personality who got his start in the medium in 1984, Pizzarelli is co-host, alongside wife Jessica Molaskey, of *Radio Deluxe with John Pizzarelli*. He has performed on America's most popular national television shows such as *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, *Conan*, and *Great Performances*, as well as the talk shows of Jay Leno, David Letterman, Regis Philbin and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

**John Pizzarelli – Stage & Screen**  
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