



Bay Area Cabaret

For Immediate Release

**BAY AREA CABARET DEBUT OF JULIE BENKO,
BROADWAY'S SENSATIONAL *FUNNY GIRL* STANDBY-TO-BREAKOUT STAR AND
JASON YEAGER, HIGHLY PRAISED JAZZ PIANIST-COMPOSER,
PERFORM THEIR ACCLAIMED HIT SHOW *HAND IN HAND*
SUNDAY, APRIL 16 AT 5 P.M., VENETIAN ROOM SAN FRANCISCO FAIRMONT**

For Tickets, visit bayareacabaret.org

SAN FRANCISCO (March 17, 2023) — **Bay Area Cabaret** presents the highly anticipated cabaret debut of **Julie Benko**, Broadway's sensational *Funny Girl* standby-to-breakout star as Fanny Brice, and **Jason Yeager**, the highly praised jazz pianist-composer, in their new hit show, *Hand in Hand*, on Sunday, April 16 at 5 p.m., at the elegant Venetian Room, San Francisco Fairmont, 950 Mason Street. Joining this musical power couple will be a trio of all-star musicians, **Daniel Fabricant** on bass; **Dave Rokeach**, on drums; and **Daniel Casares** on woodwinds.

Having just released an eclectic album of American standards and original songs, or "Quarantunes," Julie Benko and her talented musical director/husband Jason Yeager will perform selections from their Club 44 release *Hand in Hand*, including "All I've Ever Known" (Anais Mitchell), Nina Simone's "It Might as Well be Spring" and Janis Joplin's "Mercedes Benz."

Critical praise for the new album was swift and unanimous earning the BroadwayWorld Cabaret Award for Best Commercial Album and garnering a MAC Award for Best Major Album. A gracious and multi-talented artist, often compared to Tony Award-winning star **Sutton Foster**, Benko easily demonstrates the wide range of colors in her voice with *Hand in Hand*: <https://youtu.be/pE8MFh6LexM> and <https://youtu.be/dMSJYC4E7ql>

The New York Sun had high praise for *Hand in Hand*: "The perfect Fannie Brice for our time, Ms. Benko may have had a secret weapon: the collaboration with her husband, the jazz pianist and composer Jason Yeager... They make us realize what an incredible song ['People'] actually is. Ms. Benko sings it like she truly is a person who needs people — or 'one very special person,' at the very least."

ABOUT JULIE BENKO:

Benko, an award-winning actress, singer, and writer based in New York City, is currently marching her band out on Broadway as Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl* every Thursday and other performances as the

designated alternate to **Lea Michelle**. Of her performance in the role, *The New York Times* wrote, "Julie Benko is the bright-eyed, dulcet-voiced soprano who went from standby to star." Simultaneously, she was named the **2022 Breakout Star for Theater in the New York Times**, honored as one of "40 Under 40" for Crain's *New York Business*, and hailed by CBS Mornings as "Broadway's Breakout Star."

She has played leading roles in various off-Broadway and regional productions, and enjoys a vibrant concert career, having headlined sold-out shows at the famed Birdland Jazz Club, 54 Below, as well as other prestigious venues around the country. Locally in 2017, Benko appeared as Bella in the musical *Rags* for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley and picked up a Bay Area Theatre Critic's Circle Award nomination for Best Featured Actress in a Musical. She won first prize and the Johnny Mercer Award in the national American Traditions Vocal Competition. The Connecticut native holds a BFA in Drama and an MFA in Acting from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Julie Benko is also a writer. In 2020, Julie wrote, directed, and starred in her first short, "The Newlywed's Guide to Physical Intimacy," a heartwarming comedy which follows a Hasidic Jewish couple on their wedding night. The film has since won praise in numerous international festivals. Her first full-length play, "**The District**," set in New Orleans' legal red-light district prior to World War I, was named a semifinalist at the 2022 Eugene O'Neil National Playwrights Conference. Among other accomplishments during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, Benko picked up Yiddish on DuoLingo and fulfilled her lifelong dream of learning to play the clarinet.

For an in-depth interview with Julie Benko and her rise to fame in *Funny Girl*, read all about it in *TIME.com*: <https://time.com/6205372/julie-benko-funny-girl-interview/>

ABOUT JASON YEAGER

In addition to releasing the new recording of *Hand in Hand* (Club44 Records) with Benko, Jason Yeager scored an additional hit with his *Unstuck in Time: The Kurt Vonnegut Suite* (Sunnyside Records) with his eponymous septet and special guest, Miguel Zenón. *Unstuck in Time* was described as "both complex and highly accessible" (*JazzTimes*) and "an elaborate valentine to Vonnegut" (*Downbeat*).

Inspired by the social activism and vision of his mentor, Danilo Pérez, Yeager release the acclaimed 2019 album, *New Songs of Resistance* (Outside in Music), which includes reimagined *nueva canción* protest songs from South America and original compositions that address contemporary social issues. The album was hailed by the *New York Music Daily* as "one of the best albums of 2019 in any style of music."

Yeager is a regular performer at the Blue Note, Smalls Jazz Club, Birdland Jazz Club, Berklee Performance Center, Panama Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall and venues across the country. Within his busy performance and recording career, Yeager is Assistant Professor of Piano at Boston's Berklee College of Music, and teaches piano at the New York Jazz Academy and privately. The multi award-winning artist is a Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude graduate of the Tufts University/New England Conservatory of Music Double Degree Program, and earned a Master of Music, summa cum laude, from the Berklee Global Jazz Institute.

Following Julie Benko and Jason Yeager's *Hand in Hand* debut, Bay Area Cabaret's season will continue Sunday, May 14 at 7.30 p.m. (Mother's Day) with the one and only, **John Pizzarelli** and his wife **Jessica Molaskey**, and in her Bay Area Cabaret debut, their daughter singer/guitarist **Maddie**. The trio will take the stage of the Venetian Room for a beloved tradition performing songs made popular by the late Bucky Pizzarelli and familiar selections by contemporary singer/songwriters. <https://youtu.be/VBSTuXo6OOM> and - <https://youtu.be/l2-miJDBTBE>

Tickets for both shows are available via www.cityboxoffice.com by calling the Bay Area Cabaret Box Office, (415) 927-4636.

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Please connect for interviews, artwork and press credentials.