Nat “King” Cole and Me, starring Gregory Porter

with the Minnesota Orchestra

Gregory Porter, vocals
Vince Mendoza, conductor and arranger | Chip Crawford, piano

Saturday, December 1, 2018, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Tonight’s program will be announced from the stage, and will feature original music by Gregory Porter as well as selections popularized by Nat “King” Cole, performed in newly-created arrangements by Vince Mendoza.

There will be one intermission.

For vocalist **Gregory Porter**, the influence of Nat “King” Cole on his life and music runs deep, a through-line that reaches back into some of his earliest childhood memories, and culminates in the release of the two-time Grammy Award-winning vocalist’s acclaimed fifth studio album *Nat “King” Cole & Me*, a heartfelt tribute to the legendary singer, pianist and Capitol recording artist. A formative experience in Porter’s life came when he wrote a short song at age 5 and played it for his mother, who complimented him as sounding like Nat “King” Cole. Porter then delved into his mother's record collection and was fascinated by what he later called Cole’s “nurturing sound [that] filled a void in me.” Years later, after his role in the Tony-nominated musical *It Ain’t Nothin’ But the Blues*, Porter dramatized his deep appreciation for Cole in a semi-autobiographical musical, *Nat “King” Cole & Me*, which premiered in 2004. That musical underpins Porter’s third Blue Note Records release, *Nat “King” Cole & Me*, the follow-up to his Grammy-winning albums *Liquid Spirit* and *Take Me to the Alley*, which established Porter as his generation’s most soulful jazz singer-songwriter. More: gregoryporter.com.

**Vince Mendoza** has been at the forefront of the jazz and contemporary music scene as a composer, conductor and recording artist for the last 20 years. He was recognized as “Best Composer/Arranger” by *Swing Journal*’s critic’s poll in Japan. His CD *Epiphany* features his compositions played by the London Symphony Orchestra. His 2011 solo release *Nights on Earth* features his original compositions arranged for small and large ensembles, with guest appearances by Luciana Souza, Malian vocalist Tom Diakite, and musicians from Spain, Africa and Brazil. His most recent Grammy-nominated release *Homecoming* celebrates his new compositions for the WDR Big Band in Köln, Germany. Mendoza’s arranging has appeared on many critically acclaimed projects that include dozens of albums with songwriting legends such as Björk, Chaka Khan, Al Jarreau, Bobby McFerrin, Diana Krall, Melody Gardot, Sting and Joni Mitchell. He has received six Grammy Awards and 31 Grammy nominations. Mendoza is the composer in residence with the West Deutsche Rundfunk in Köln and the conductor laureate of the Netherlands Metropole Orkest. More: vincemendoza.net.