

arts
education
njpac



brian stokes

mitchell

**the david g. berger
master class series**



about brian stokes mitchell

On October 31, 1957, Brian Stokes Mitchell was born in Seattle, WA, but he spent much of his childhood in Guam military bases as his father was a civil engineer for the U.S. Navy. He has been singing since age four and took much inspiration from his older brother. Stokes began piano lessons at six years old and began acting at 14. As he grew into his teens, he began teaching himself composing, arranging and orchestration. These self-taught talents were emboldened when he took UCLA classes to study film scoring, orchestration and conducting. He used what he learned there to score and conduct a number of *Trapper John, MD* episodes, a series on which he was also a regular cast member.

In the film world, he is known for scoring, voice acting and his multitude of appearances in sitcoms, but some would argue he has made an even bigger splash in the theater world. The two-time Tony Award-winner has a career spanning Broadway, television, film, philanthropy and concert appearances with the country's finest conductors and orchestras. He has collected honors from Theatre World to the key to New York City for his roles in *Kiss Me, Kate*; *Man of La Mancha*, *King Hedley II*, *Ragtime*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and *Shuffle Along*. An extremely versatile and in-demand singer, Stokes has performed at

venues spanning jazz, opera, pop, country and musical theater worlds. He has worked with John Williams, Marvin Hamlisch, Gustavo Dudamel, Keith Lockhart, Michael Tilson Thomas, The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Big Band, The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and The Muppets. Throughout his career, no stone has been left unturned, and few performing arts disciplines have been left unexplored. He also puts his musical talents to work in recording studios, with appearances on more than 20 albums and as producer, arranger and orchestrator on his three solo albums including his last recording, *Simply Broadway* and his latest recording *Plays with Music*.

Stokes has enjoyed working with numerous charitable organizations from the March of Dimes to the USO. In 2004, he began serving as chairman of the Actors Fund, and 12 years later, he was awarded the prestigious Isabelle Stevenson Tony for his charitable work with the organization. In 2016, Stokes was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame. He has performed multiple times for U.S. Presidents Clinton and Obama and has been invited twice to perform at the White House. He is on the board of Americans for the Arts and also serves on Black Theatre United. Amongst all of his accomplishments from film to theater to music to writing, he speaks most graciously about the time he has served giving back to the community and investing in the future of performing arts industries.

accolades

- 2023 Theatre World Awards, John Willis Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre
- 2016 Tony Awards, Isabelle Stevenson Award
- 2003 Helen Hayes Awards, Outstanding Lead Actor, Non-Resident Production
- 2001 Drama Desk Awards, Outstanding Actor in a Play
- 2000 Outer Critics Circle Awards, Outstanding Actor in a Musical
- 2000 Tony Awards, Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical
- 1998 Drama League Awards, Distinguished Performance Award
- 1988 Theatre World Awards, Performance
- Chairman of the Actors Fund, Black Theatre United and Americans for the Arts
- Honorary Doctorate, Boston Conservatory at Berklee
- New York City Key to the City

In moments of destitution, Brian Stokes Mitchell relies on music to get him through. As chairman of the Actors Fund, Stokes oversees their emergency fund, which normally provides \$2 million a year to about 1,500 people, but within the first 20 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, \$24 million had been distributed to 17,000 people struggling for essentials like food, rent, insurance, and medicine. An avid advocate, Stokes never stopped working to provide aid during the height of the pandemic, but what really took the world by storm was what occurred when he himself was sick. Overwhelmed by the lack of hope across the world, Stokes made headlines during the pandemic when he opened his windows and began singing "An Impossible Dream," not caring who in New York City would hear him. This was the same song he performed at the 2003 Tony Awards from his role as Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha*. This song, written by Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion and made popular by Robert Goulet, reflects humanity's desire to overcome obstacles, pursue goals, and "dream the impossible dream." As Stokes sang this song, it resonated with those listening and in need of hope. He began singing at his window every night, and more and more people gathered daily to hear his song of hope. In an interview, Mitchell says he dedicated these performances to all the essential workers, especially healthcare workers, who kept the world spinning in the midst of international sickness. This tradition continued for four weeks during the COVID-19 pandemic.



“My philosophy is when the universe asks you to give back, especially when you’ve been so fortunate, you say yes”

– Brian Stokes Mitchell

seed questions to consider

1. How can being multidisciplinary develop someone's creative potential?
2. How might artistic merit give an artist a platform to affect change?
3. In what moments from history or your personal life has art been used as a symbol of hope?

vocabulary



Actors Fund/Entertainment Community Fund
Renamed from Actors Fund to Entertainment Community Fund in 2022 and founded in 1882, this organization raises money to uplift performers through workshops, support groups, online resources and financial aid

Americans for the Arts
An organization dedicated to serving and advancing the networks and individuals who cultivate art in America with the aim of ensuring every American has access to the transformative power of the arts

Autodidact
A self-taught person

Baritone
A vocal range between a tenor and bass, extending from G2 to G4

Black Theatre United
An organization dedicated to protecting Black people, Black theatre, and Black lives by educating, empowering, and inspiring audiences to pursue justice and equality

Equity Card
Proof of membership in the Actors' Equity Association of the United States or Equity in the United Kingdom

Off-Broadway
A professional theater venue in New York City that is not affiliated with Broadway. These tend to be medium sized, with seating capacity between 100-499 and follow the same trade union contracts as Broadway.

Overture
An orchestral piece at the beginning of an opera, suite, play, or other extended composition

Philanthropy
The desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money to good causes

Projection
Speaking or singing so that the human voice is heard powerfully and clearly, utilized in theater performance to ensure audiences can understand dialogue and lyrics

Score
A written musical composition showing all the vocal and instrumental parts arranged one below the other



resources

Websites

Brian Stokes Mitchell | Broadway singer and leading man
brianstokes.com

Wikipedia | Brian Stokes Mitchell
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Stokes_Mitchell

Broadway World | Brian Stokes Mitchell:
Credits, Bio, News & More
broadwayworld.com/people/Brian-Stokes-Mitchell

IMDb | Brian Stokes Mitchell
imdb.com/name/nm0593175

AP News | Brian Stokes Mitchell returns to Broadway in 'magical' show
apnews.com/brian-stokes-mitchell-returns-to-broadway-in-magical-show-f6b3de7f3c2f441dbd583fbb160ceefc

DC Theater Arts | "15 Questions in 15 Minutes with Brian Stokes Mitchell"
dctheaterarts.org/2022/06/17/15-questions-in-15-minutes-with-brian-stokes-mitchell

Variety Magazine | Brian Stokes Mitchell Talks Broadway's Future, *Ratatouille* musical
variety.com/2021/legit/news/brian-stokes-mitchell-broadway-1234879053/#/

Broadway Direct | Brian Stokes Mitchell on the Star-Studded PBS Special & Changing Theater
broadwaydirect.com/brian-stokes-mitchell-on-the-star-studded-pbs-special-changing-theater

Broadway Buzz | Broadway.com
Brian Stokes Mitchell on Acting and Advocacy: 'It's One of the Reasons I Was Put on the Planet'
broadway.com/buzz/199388/brian-stokes-mitchell-on-acting-and-advocacy-its-one-of-the-reasons-i-was-put-on-the-planet

Videos

YouTube | Brian Stokes Mitchell Performs "The Impossible Dream" on the 2020 A Capitol Fourth
youtube.com/watch?v=TZBLAmdULkQ

Home (brianstokes.com)
brianstokes.com/?pgid=ja4i50fi3-f167b512-ee02-47e2-a337-64fa7b39fc4

Broadway Legend Brian Stokes Mitchell Is Still Singing on His NYC Balcony Every Night!
Brian Stokes Mitchell, Broadway | Just Jared: Celebrity News and Gossip | Entertainment
justjared.com/2020/04/17/broadway-legend-brian-stokes-mitchell-is-still-singing-on-his-nyc-balcony-every-night

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the arts in your school

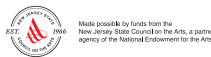
In-School Residencies: NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development: Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

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study the arts at njpac

Saturday Programs: NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.