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NONESUCH RELEASES NATALIE MERCHANT'S *CABINET OF WONDER*, MUSIC FROM SINGER-SONGWRITER'S COLLABORATION WITH CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND CHICAGO CHILDREN'S THEATRE, AUGUST 21

Digital album features 14 songs based on traditional nursery rhymes as well as 3 originals by Merchant, performed by Merchant with musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra & special guests

Two album tracks, "Little Miss Muffet" & "Peter Pumpkin Eater," available today along with accompanying videos

CHICAGO — Nonesuch Records releases Natalie Merchant's [*Cabinet of Wonder*](#)—a digital collection of seventeen songs and accompanying videos from the acclaimed singer-songwriter's collaboration with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and Chicago Children's Theatre (CCT)—on August 21, 2026. The seventeen songs on [*Cabinet of Wonder*](#) reimagine Mother Goose and her rhymes for a new generation of young children through modern interpretations of the classic children's canon and three originals by Merchant—performed by Merchant, musicians from the CSO and special guests—in orchestral arrangements by Megan Gould. Two songs from the album, "[Little Miss Muffet](#)" and "[Peter Pumpkin Eater](#)," along with their videos, are available today.

All of the music was recorded at Chicago's Electrical Audio with Grammy-winning chief audio engineer Ryan Freeland. Over the seventeen-track collection, myriad musical styles and instruments are introduced to young ears, from the elegant chamber arrangement of "Little Nut Tree" to the brassy Dixieland jazz of "[Little Miss Muffet](#)," the Calypso swing of "Humpty Dumpty" to the Celtic rollick of "Hickory Dickory Dock" and the danceable "The Queen of Hearts." Music videos highlight performances by Merchant, musicians from the CSO, shadow puppetry by the Chicago-based theater

group Manual Cinema, and a cast of twenty-four Chicago children recruited from Chicago Children's Theatre's education program.

Designed as a free enrichment program that introduces music, poetry, and the dramatic arts to young children, [*Cabinet of Wonder*](#) represents three years of behind-the-scenes work among the project's collaborators and the culmination of Natalie's four decades of involvement in children's arts and education. Merchant has been drawn to working with children since she was in high school and has continued to work with them throughout her life. But the seed for *Cabinet of Wonder* began germinating eight years ago, during Merchant's time as artist-in-residence at an upstate New York Head Start preschool program. During her three years there, she began writing songs based on the classic nursery rhymes she had learned from her mother and had passed on to her daughter. Realizing the centuries-old verses could become powerful teaching tools, she built lessons around their delightful language and absurd imagery.

"I wanted to find a way to share all that joyful learning I was witnessing," she says. "I found wonderful partners in the CSO and Chicago Children's Theatre. They assembled a remarkable team of creative collaborators, and together, we devised a way to do just that.

"I've reached the point in my life where I'm considering what I'll leave behind. I believe *Cabinet of Wonder* will be my legacy; every skill that I've acquired over the last forty-five years has gone into this project," says Merchant—who not only composed, sang, and acted (a dual role as Mother Goose and a librarian-teacher figure named Miss Natalie) but also designed and stitched the costumes, wrote teaching guides, edited the videos with post-production company Abstrakt, and oversaw creative direction for its content-rich [website](#). The site makes available to all, at no charge, all the rhymes, music, photographs, videos, sheet music, teaching guides, and other resources.

After a year of successful pilot programs in Chicago Public Schools (which culminated in concerts with Merchant for 3,000 children at Symphony Center in Chicago), the model is now ready for other school systems and orchestras to replicate.

Releasing in late summer, the digital album brings this unprecedented public arts project to a wider audience. In support, Merchant will spend the 2026-27 school year in partnership with the National Head Start Association, leading teacher training sessions, conducting site visits, attending educational conferences, and collaborating with early childhood education divisions of public and private schools, as the program launches nationwide.

Cabinet of Wonder

Cabinet of Wonder (theme song)

Who is Mother Goose?

Humpty Dumpty

Peter Pumpkin Eater

Little Miss Muffet

Old King Cole

Little Nut Tree

Hickory Dickory Dock

Hey Diddle Diddle

The Queen of Hearts

Jack Be Nimble

Jack Sprat

The Cuckoo

Mary Had a Pretty Bird

Rub-A-Dub-Dub

A Crooked Man

Rhyming Town

The Goodbye Song

Over her forty-year career, **Natalie Merchant** has attained a place among America's most respected recording artists. She has earned a reputation for being a songwriter of quality and a captivating stage performer and has distinguished herself as a social justice and environmental activist. Merchant began her musical career as the lead vocalist and lyricist of the pop music band 10,000 Maniacs and released six albums—including one platinum, two double-platinum, and one triple-platinum records—with the group: *The Wishing Chair* (1985), *In My Tribe* (1987), *Blind Man's Zoo* (1989), *Hope Chest* (1990), *Our Time in Eden* (1992), and *10,000 Maniacs MTV Unplugged* (1993). Merchant left the band in 1994 and has subsequently released nine albums as a solo artist with combined sales of seven million copies: *Tigerlily* (1995), *Ophelia* (1998), *Natalie Merchant Live* (1999), *Motherland* (2001), *The House Carpenter's Daughter* (2003), *Leave Your Sleep* (2010), *Natalie Merchant* (2014), *Paradise Is There* (2015), *Butterfly* (2017), and *Keep Your Courage* (2023).

Merchant has collaborated with a wide range of artists, including Billy Bragg, Gavin Bryars, David Byrne, The Chieftains, Cowboy Junkies, Philip Glass, Kronos Quartet, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Mavis Staples, REM, and Wilco. She served on the New York State Council on the Arts from 2007–2011 at the appointment of Governor Elliot Spitzer and was recently appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center by New York State Senator Leader Chuck Schumer. Merchant's awards include: The Library Lion Award from the New York Public Library

(2011), The American Society of Authors Composers & Publishers (ASCAP) Champion Award (2019), and The John Lennon Real Love Award (2019). More information about Merchant's career and philanthropic work may be found [here](#).

The **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** is a global artistic leader, hailed as one of the most esteemed ensembles in classical music. Founded in 1891, the Orchestra cultivates the future of music while building upon its legacy. The CSO's acclaimed musicians command a deep, evolving repertoire, sharing their famous sound with music lovers in hundreds of concerts annually in Chicago and on tour throughout the United States and around the globe, as well as in its weekly syndicated radio broadcasts and a catalog of celebrated recordings. Through its Negaunee Music Institute, the CSO produces programming that nurtures lifelong engagement with music, including an ever-expanding suite of education concerts for young people, in-depth school partnerships and innovative online learning resources.

Founded in 2005, the critically acclaimed **Chicago Children's Theatre** focuses on the production of first-rate children's theatre in Chicago, with top writing, performing, and directorial talent and high-quality design and production expertise. The company has built a national reputation for new work, producing 24 world premieres including *Carmela Full of Wishes*, *Milo Imagines the World*, *Last Stop on Market Street*, and *Go Dog Go! • Ve Perro ¡Ve!*. Chicago Children's Theatre also produces The Red Kite Project, a multi-sensory interactive theatre program tailored specifically to the needs of children on the autism spectrum. In 2017, Chicago Children's Theatre became the first theater for young audiences in the nation to win a National Theatre Award from the American Theatre Wing, creators of the Tony Awards. Chicago Children's Theatre aspires to enrich its community through diverse and significant theatrical and educational programming that engages and inspires the child in all of us.

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is committed to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in school and in life. The opportunities offered by Head Start lead to healthier and empowered children and families and stronger, more vibrant communities. NHSA is the voice for more than 750,000 children, 250,000 staff and more than 1,600 Head Start grant recipients in the United States.

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