

Harry Connick Jr. to Star in NBC's 'Annie Live!'

Harry Connick Jr. will portray the iconic character Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks in NBC's *Annie Live!* musical, set to air on Dec. 2, to kick off the Christmas season.

The Emmy and Grammy awarded actor previously appeared on the Broadway stage in the revivals of *The Pajama Game* and *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*. He also wrote the score for Broadway's *Thou Shalt Not* and recently appeared in the world premiere of the musical *The Sting*.

The Daddy Warbucks role was originally performed by Reid Shelton in its 1977 Broadway debut and then taken to the silver screen in 1982 and 1999, where Albert Finney and Victor Garber, respectively, portrayed the over-the-top billionaire.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to play Daddy Warbucks in *Annie Live!* and working alongside Taraji P. Henson is a dream come true," Connick said in a statement. "I love this show, and its musical message of love and hope couldn't come at a better time."

Taraji P. Henson (*Empire*, *Hidden Figures*) has already been cast as orphanage caretaker Miss Hannigan. The search for the title role is still underway, multiple sources report.

"I love the idea of live television—the more difficult the tightrope walk is for me the more excited I get, so I'm just really fired up about it," Connick said in a recent *People* interview. "It's this intersection of live theater and film and television, so I think there's an opportunity to do things that can exist in any of those mediums."

He spoke with Charisma News following the release of his "quarantine album," *Alone With My Faith*, produced entirely in

the confines of his home at the height of the pandemic.

He told Dr. Steve Greene that his departure from the accolade-studded norm of his craft allowed him to reconnect with his gospel roots. As he reflected on the significance of that time, he realized the vital message God wanted him to share.

“I started to think about some ideas I had about what I was feeling with the pandemic, which I had an inkling that a lot of people were feeling the same thing,” he explained. “So I wrote a bunch of songs too. So the album turned from a straight-up gospel album to an album of faith, and all the emotions—the entire spectrum that I’ve saved that I was feeling over the last year.” {eoa}