artsLife

Inside Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts

FALL 2025

SEASON'S GREETINGS!

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David Foster and Katharine McPhee

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- Hot Tickets
- Great Orchestra Series
- Backstage News
- Broadway in Orlando

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Happy (hot) holidays! This year the arts center will offer more seasonal shows than ever before, including concerts in every genre, choral and orchestral classics, elaborate dance presentations, a film screening with a comedy legend and other special events that will have you feeling neck-deep in winter wonder even if the mercury refuses to budge.

FEATURED SERIES

48 GREAT ORCHESTRA SERIES
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BACKSTAGE

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AdventHealth
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dr. phillips center

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PHOTO BY ANDY PARADISE (ORCHESTRA)



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photo | Blue Bamboo Center for the Arts

WE'RE FEELING MORE ENERGIZED THAN EVER AS MOMENTUM BUILDS

Friends,

Fall is a time of exciting transition, and we feel energized by what's in store this season: more holiday shows than ever before, Tony-winning productions and an incredible classical music lineup. We're excited for you to experience it all!

We step into this chapter with momentum fueled by strategic investments, among them the purchase of two key parcels in Downtown Orlando that pave the way for future development. We welcomed seven new board members, each of whom brings bold energy, fresh insight and a deep love for the arts that strengthen our vision of Arts For Every Life®.

Together, these milestones position us to ensure that the arts center will continue to thrive as a global home for creativity, connection and wellness.

This summer we welcomed nearly 600 students to our summer camps—developing skills, building confidence and creating lasting memories. We're proud to continue nurturing young talent through arts education programs like the annual Applause Awards.

One shining example is student actor and Lake Nona High School junior Adam Bouchachia, who represented us at the national Jimmy Awards in New York City—earning a spot among the top four male finalists. His journey reminds us of what's possible when young people are supported through the arts.

The 25/26 AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando season is underway with *The Wiz* kicking off the magic—and there's a 12-week lineup that promises an exciting mix of performances. Over at Judson's Live, our new seasonal menu is here, which features ceviche, pancetta meatballs and lemon-lavender crème brûlée. It's a delicious way to enjoy live music and great company.

Soon, the legendary Vienna Philharmonic will make its Orlando debut in Steinmetz Hall as part of our 2026 Great Orchestra Series. Together with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and The Philadelphia Orchestra, this powerhouse trio sets the stage for our most prestigious orchestral season yet.

The holidays shine even brighter this year with more performances than ever—from Straight No Chaser's a cappella magic to Chevy Chase onstage with a screening of *Christmas Vacation* to Flamenco del Sol's *Cascanueces* and so much more!

We wrap up our milestone anniversary on Friday, October 10 with the 10th Anniversary Gala featuring seven-time Grammy winner Jon Batiste. Proceeds will support programs like STROKESTRA® and our vision of Arts For Every Life®.

So many surprises and delights lie ahead. Join us as we step into this new season together, remaining committed to making a difference through the power of the arts.

Best,

Katherine Ramsberger

Katherine Ramsberger
President & CEO



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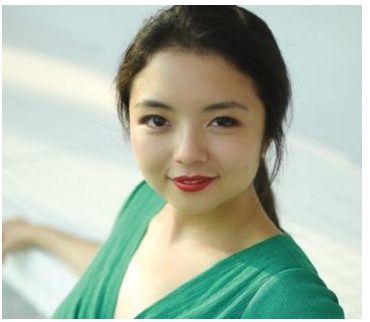
HOT TICKETS

Upcoming performances offer something for everyone.

Opera Orlando Presents

La Bohème

Friday & Sunday, October 3 & 5
7:30 p.m. (Friday), 2 p.m. (Sunday)
SEASON PREMIERE





Bizhou Chang (top) will play Mimi and Yi Li (above) will play Rodolfo in *La Bohème*.

Could it really have been a decade since Opera Orlando emerged from the ashes of the similarly named Orlando Opera and rejuvenated the genre in Central Florida? Well, time flies when you're having fun—which Opera Orlando is certainly doing as it launches the 10th iteration of Opera on the MainStage with Puccini's beloved *La Bohème*. Helmed by Grant Preisser, the company's artistic director, this *La Bohème* will be set in Shanghai during the 1930s—the original was set in Paris a century earlier—and most cast members will be Asian American. But the story, which inspired the hit Broadway musical *Rent*, will remain a tear-jerker that explores love among a close-knit group of artsy friends whom the French would have dubbed bohemians. Conductor Allan R. Scott will make his company debut directing the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra for this production, which will also feature the Opera Orlando Chorus and Youth Company. The opera will be sung in Italian with English and Spanish translations projected above the stage. Next up will be *Silent Night* (Friday, February 6, 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, February 8, 2 p.m.). The Pulitzer prize-winning modern opera—with music by Kevin Puts and libretto by Mark Campbell—recounts a miraculous moment during World War I when Scottish, French and German officers defied their superiors and negotiated a temporary truce on Christmas Eve (see page 36). On a lighter note, up next will be Franz Lehár's effervescent *The Merry Widow* (Friday, April 24, 2 p.m., and Sunday, April 26, 7:30 p.m.), an original production that will feature dancers from Orlando Ballet with Noam Aviel conducting the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. The star-studded cast will be headlined by soprano Sarah Joy Miller, who was recently featured in the HBO series *The Gilded Age*. With *The Merry Widow*, you'll get a taste of old-world glamour, aristocratic reverie, catchy melodies—and, of course, the can-can. The opera will be sung in English, with English and Spanish translations projected above the stage. The season will conclude with an optional add-on, *A Decade of Divas* (Saturday May 16, 2026, 7:30 p.m., VIP package available), which will feature stars from previous seasons—backed by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra—performing opera as well as hits from Broadway. As usual, all Opera on the MainStage shows will be in Steinmetz Hall.



Go Online

for a full calendar, ticket prices and more information
drphillipscenter.org/events

Shows are subject to change

Phantasmagoria XVI

Hauntingly Whimsical Tales

Thursday–Sunday, October 9–12
Four Shows, Various Times
Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater

In some circles, the late Edward Gorey might be best remembered as an illustrator whose delicately wrought (but unsettling) gothic pen-and-ink drawings helped pave the way for the likes of Tim Burton. But Gorey was also a prolific writer of playfully morbid short stories with such titles as *The Beastly Baby* and *The Wuggly Ump*. That pedigree makes the Chicago-born master of the mischievous an ideal subject for Phantasmagoria, the Victorian horror storytelling troupe that's structuring its Halloween 2025 performance schedule around a tribute to this seminal sardonicist—who died in 2000 and would have become a centurion this year. A cast of 20 performers will interpret Gorey's winkingly dour scenarios in *Phantasmagoria XVI: Hauntingly Whimsical Tales—Celebrating 100 Years of Author and Artist Edward Gorey*. The production will encompass dance, spoken recitations, live music, projections and puppetry (with puppets provided by Nic Parks of Orlando Family Stage). The intent is to create a continuous, unbroken string of vignettes with an elegant waltz as a framing device. John DiDonna, the troupe's founder, says he was stimulated by the challenge of weaving Gorey's tales into a seamless production and of fleshing out some of his more sparse writing without adding a single word.

Jon Batiste

Jon Batiste Plays America: The Big Money Tour

Friday, October 10 | 8 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater



Metairie, Louisiana native Jon Batiste—a multi-instrumentalist who from 2015 to 2022 was the genial, melodica-toting leader of "Stay Human," the house band on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*—is today described as a once-in-a-generation solo talent. To prove it, Batiste has won seven Grammys out of 22 nominations (one win was for *We Are*, which was named 2021's Album of the Year). In fact, that same year he won an astonishing five Grammys out of 11 nominations. Batiste has also notched a Best Original Score Oscar (shared with Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross) for 2020's *Soul*, a comedy-drama from Pixar Animation Studios. And he got a Best Original Song nomination for "It Never Went Away," from 2023's *American Symphony*, a critically acclaimed Netflix documentary that explored a year in the life of Batiste and his wife—speaker, columnist and bestselling author Suleika Jaouad—as she battled leukemia. Batiste's appearance is the cornerstone of the arts center's 10th anniversary celebration. Concert-only tickets are available as well as sponsorships and table purchases for the 10th Anniversary Gala, which will get underway with a cocktail reception and multicourse dinner in adjacent Steinmetz Hall preceding the performance. The gala will support expansion of the arts center's arts and wellness programs. To learn more, call 407.992.1743 or email rsvp@drphillipscenter.org.

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Group Publisher/Editor

HARRY WESSEL
Contributing Editor

CAROLYN EDMUNDS
Graphic Designer

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The Rocky Horror Picture Show (18+)

50th Anniversary Spectacular Tour with Barry Bostwick, Nell Campbell & Patricia Quinn

Sunday, October 12 | 7:30 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE

The Rocky Horror Picture Show, an independent 1975 comedy-horror musical based on the quirky stage production that preceded it, was withdrawn from distribution shortly after its release because critical and box-office response was miserable. The time, it seems, just wasn't right—and by that we mean the time of *day*. When theaters began to book midnight screenings, *Rocky Horror* started to attract a cult following of viewers, some of whom formed "shadow casts" by dressing as the characters and lip-syncing their dialogue while the movie played. Now, on its 50th anniversary, the tale of two innocent sweethearts and their encounter with an alien mad scientist in his eerie castle continues to be shown in theaters worldwide (especially where Halloween is celebrated) and has grossed about $120 million to date. To mark five decades of entirely unanticipated cinematic success, join original cast members Barry Bostwick (Brad Majors), Nell Campbell (Columbia) and Patricia Quinn (Magenta) for a screening of the original, unedited movie with a live shadow cast. In the lobby there'll be displays of memorabilia and artifacts from the flick—and don't forget to dress the part for a costume contest. Says Bostwick: "*Rocky Horror* has changed lives, not just ours, and had a profound effect on how we accept our differences in this world. We were fitted for our corsets and high heels and enthusiastically started singing songs that have endured for all these years. And, 'dammit Janet,' I've made nerds cool."



Joss Stone

Less Is More

Sunday, October 12 | 7 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall



Joss Stone—who at just 16 years old had a gritty, bluesy (and very adult) singing voice—rose to fame with her debut album, *The Soul Sessions* (2003). She had, in fact, grown up listening to eclectic music—but was particularly inspired by American R&B and soul music from such artists as Dusty Springfield and Aretha Franklin. "I kind of clicked into soul music more than anything else because of the vocals," she told *MTV News*. "You've got to have good vocals to sing soul music and I always liked it ever since I was little." Stone's sophomore release, *Mind Body & Soul* (2004), spawned the hit single "You Had Me" and made the Dover, England-born singer and songwriter the youngest British female solo artist ever to top the U.K. Albums Chart. Since then, she has sold more than 15 million albums worldwide and earned five Grammy nominations, winning one in 2007—Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals—for her cover of Sly and the Family Stone's "Family Affair" with John Legend and Van Hunt. In 2014, Stone completed her audacious *Total World Tour*, during which she shared stages with local artists and raised funds for charities in dozens of countries through the Joss Stone Foundation. Stone's 2022 release, *Never Forget My Love*, was written with and produced by Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics. In 2023, Stone embarked on her *20 Years of Soul* anniversary tour, which resulted in a live album. But as her current tour's title notes, sometimes less really is more. That's why Stone's fans can expect an evening of intimate, acoustic performances of her signature boundary-defying music. I *Part of Morgan Stanley Moments at Dr. Phillips Center.*

Gabby's Dollhouse Live!

Monday, October 13 | 6 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE



Gabby's Dollhouse Live! is an "a-meow-zing" musical stage production inspired by the hit DreamWorks Animation preschool series that airs on Netflix. In this adventure, Gabby unboxes a special acorn that needs the magical touch of a rainbow to grow. But when CatRat causes a color *cat*-astrophe and breaks the rainbow, Gabby and the Gabby Cats must find the colors again to set things right. So they travel to the Cat-O-Sphere, Mermaid-Lantis and some favorite Dollhouse locations in search of the scattered hues needed to make repairs. *Gabby's Dollhouse Live!* will feature such song favorites as "Sprinkle Party," "Hey Gabby," "Music in You," and "You Can't Spell Meow Without Me." The show, which is designed for children ages 2 to 6 (but fun for all ages), will be performed by a cast of singer-actors and puppeteers who'll leave everyone *feline* fine. I *Family at Dr. Phillips Center supported by Experience Kissimmee.*

Orlando Ballet Presents

Swan Lake

Thursday, October 16–Sunday, October 19
Five Performances, Various Times
Steinmetz Hall
SEASON PREMIERE



Hitomi Nakamura and Cielo Ibarrola

PHOTO BY ZAVALETA ESCOBEDO PHOTOGRAPHY

Orlando Ballet will leap into its 2025–26 season with one of the most-performed ballets of all time, Tchaikovsky's epic and unforgettable *Swan Lake*. Plunge into a world of moonlit lakes, magical curses and star-crossed lovers as Prince Siegfried pursues the beautiful Odette, who is under an evil sorcerer's spell that can only be broken by a vow of true love and fidelity. Christopher Stowell will choreograph this version of the ballet, which will feature live music from the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. Up next will be Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* (December 5–24, multiple performances at various times). Jorden Morris, the company's artistic director, gave the dusty but durable dance a critically acclaimed $3.6 million makeover two seasons ago and will offer a few new tweaks this year (see page 37). Once the holidays end, get ready for *Carmen* (February 12–15, 2026, multiple performances at various times), which will bring a pulse-pounding blend of passion, power and raw physicality. Set to a driving score by Georges Bizet, *Carmen* tells the story of a fierce, free-spirited woman whose irresistible charm ignites obsession, jealousy and heartbreak. Kenneth Tindall will be the choreographer. Then, on the heels of *Carmen*, the company will deliver three distinct works in one program with *Balanchine, Godden, Gill* (March 27–29, 2026, multiple performances at various times). The dances—an assortment of the evocative and the edgy—will include George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante*, set to a score by Tchaikovsky; Mark Godden's *Angels in the Architecture*, set to a score from musicians that range from Niccolò Paganini to Tom Waits; and Heath Gill's *Confronting Genius*, set to a score by Aaron Copland. The season will conclude with Morris's acclaimed interpretation of *The Great Gatsby* (April 30–Sunday, May 3, 2026, multiple performances at various times), the opulent (but ultimately tragic) Roaring '20s tale of love, ambition and betrayal based upon the novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald. All ballets will be performed in Steinmetz Hall.



Twilight In Concert

Thursday, October 16 | 7 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE



When the original *Twilight* film was released in 2008, it became so popular that it spawned five spinoffs, collectively referred to as *The Twilight Saga*, all based on the vampire-themed romantic fantasy books by Stephenie Meyer. The first film focused on the epic but fraught relationship between ordinary teenager Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart) and "vegetarian" vampire Edward (Robert Pattinson). Box office grosses clearly showed that movie monsters from generations past (think Bela Lugosi in *Dracula*) could be dreamy leading men in the modern-day subgenre of paranormal romance. So it was only a matter of time until *Twilight* received the immersive film-to-concert treatment that has renewed other popular film franchises (*Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings*). By now you know the drill: *Twilight* will be shown on a giant screen with accompaniment from a 12-piece ensemble of outstanding rock and orchestral musicians who will perform—in perfect synchronicity—the film's haunting score by Carter Burwell. Adding to the ambiance: The stage will be illuminated by thousands of twinkling candles, creating a magical atmosphere that will enhance the beauty of the film's iconic music.

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Central Florida Community Arts Presents

Hand-Drawn Jazz 2

Friday–Sunday, October 17–9
Four Shows, Various Times
Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater



For as long as animators have brought stories and characters to life, they've looked to jazz composers to lend a sense of energy, improvisation and whimsy to their creations. Why do these two colorful and kinetic art forms have so much in common? Central Florida Community Arts (CFCArts) first explored this question with its inaugural *Hand-Drawn Jazz* concert in 2023. Response was so strong that the multifaceted arts organization—which features talented volunteer performers in all its offerings—has decided to delve even deeper with *Hand-Drawn Jazz 2*. The new incarnation, which will again feature the 60-player CFCArts Big Band, will look to build on the magic of the original with tunes from such beloved classics as, among others, *Hercules, The Little Mermaid, Aladdin* and *Monsters, Inc*. You won't want to miss the boldest, baddest big band in town—under the baton of Justin Muchoney, executive director of CFCArts—as it showcases the sounds that enliven and enhance your favorite cartoons and animated films.

The Basement Yard

Friday, October 17 | 8 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater

If you're fan of bro banter, then you've probably heard *The Basement Yard,* a comedy podcast created as a solo show in 2015 by Joe Santagato. The first co-host was comedian Danny LoPriore, a frequent guest, who left to pursue other interests. In 2020, Santagato invited his boyhood friend, Frank Alvarez, to replace LoPriore. "It wasn't even a question," recalls Santagato. "It was like, 'Well, there's literally no one else who I think can actually have that same sort of special rapport that me and Danny had.'" *The Basement Yard's* simple premise is this: The duo does nothing more than engage in unscripted, unfiltered, off-the-cuff, no-holds-barred conversations about anything and everything—from childhood memories to embarrassing blunders to dating and relationships. Wait, is that *really* all there is to it? Well, yes, but it certainly helps that Santagato and Alvarez are genuinely funny. No, it's not high art, perhaps, but *The Basement Yard* consistently ranks among the top comedy podcasts on Spotify and Apple



Podcasts and has become one of the biggest revenue-generators on the membership-only platform Patreon. *The Basement Yard* is so popular, in fact, that Santagato and Alvarez—who grew up together in Queens, New York—took it on the road in 2024 and ended up performing two sold-out shows at Radio City Music Hall. The current tour is essentially a theatricalized podcast episode with audience participation adding yet another layer of potential chaos. The "basement yard," refers to Santagato's childhood home, where he and his friends would hang out together in the basement and refer to the so-called "yard" that the space encompassed.



MEGA Events USA Inc. Presents

The Rock Orchestra by Candlelight

Sunday, October 19 | 8 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater

Almost from the beginning, heavy metal and hard rock have owed a major debt to classical music. Although that connection usually takes the form of guitar heroes like Yngwie Malmsteen imitating Paganini by burning up the fretboard at 300 notes per second, such tributes sometimes flow in the opposite direction. Exhibit A is The Rock Orchestra, a 14-piece symphonic ensemble that uses the acoustic instruments of historical musical masters to interpret the songbooks of AC/DC, My Chemical Romance, Evanescence, Guns N' Roses, Metallica, Papa Roach, Rage Against the Machine, the Rolling Stones and more. But no matter the decibel level of the source material, the point is to prove that songs known to blow the roof off arenas can be conveyed just as dramatically with the tools that were once used to punctuate the courtship rituals of lords and ladies in waiting. The Rock Orchestra, which was formed just five years ago, has toured across Europe and the United States. (The upcoming local concert is, in fact, its second visit to Orlando in 18 months.) Players include a rotating cast of musicians, but constants are the aural concept and the visual presentation, which leans heavily toward the gothic. Ornate costuming and a candle-bedecked stage provide an appropriately eerie counterpoint to music that often revels in its dark side. This lockstep marriage of sight and sound makes an evening with these high-minded headbangers a compelling Halloween option for metalheads, philharmonic fanatics and just about everyone in between.

Gorskaya-Hartwick Productions Presents

World Ballet Company: Cinderella

Wednesday, October 22 | 7 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater



Los Angeles-based World Ballet Company is driven by the belief that ballet should be everywhere, and for everyone. So the company, led by Sasha Gorskaya and Gulya Hartwick, leverages their decades of combined entertainment industry expertise to create, produce and tour original productions and new takes on beloved classics—including *Cinderella*—offering Broadway-style interpretations that blend humor, charm and traditional ballet storytelling. *Cinderella*, composed in 1945 by Sergei Prokofiev to a scenario by Nikolai Volkov is a visually stunning production performed by a multinational cast of 40 professional dancers. The show features more than 150 dazzling costumes, richly detailed sets and sparkling choreography to delight fairytale fans of all ages. But be sure to enjoy this beloved classic before the clock strikes midnight. "This isn't the *Cinderella* you remember," says the creative team from World Ballet. "Our version sparkles with modern spirit, witty twists, and a few surprises that have audiences in stitches."



The Bach Festival Society of Winter Park Presents

Voctave

The 10th Anniversary Tour

Saturday, October 25 | 7:30 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall

Voctave was formed by Jamey Ray, a Rollins College student-turned-music professor who attained artist-in-residence status at the college. Soon thereafter, he became the functional equivalent of a rock star in the world of a cappella singing and began recording and touring full time with the internationally popular, 11-voice ensemble. Now, Voctave is preparing to celebrate a magical decade of dreams come true with *Voctave: The 10th Anniversary Tour*. But it won't be just music—holiday tunes, show tunes and music from Disney films—that attendees will come away remembering, says Ray, who composes the group's trademark soaring arrangements and sings tenor. "Our goal is to create an experience for the audience by giving them a show," he says. "They can expect to laugh and cry and everything in between." As if Voctave alone weren't enough, Ray also promises surprises and special guests that were still being confirmed at press time (and may not be revealed before the show anyway, because—you know—surprise). Ray, as a high school student, was recruited to attend Rollins by John Sinclair, director of the school's Department of Music and now for more than three decades also artistic director and conductor of the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park. Ray ended up graduating with a double major in computer science and music, specializing in two major instruments: voice and piano. He earned his master's degree in music technology at New York University, then returned to join the music faculty at Rollins. In 2015 he founded Voctave, which within just a few years had released a slew of albums and garnered millions of followers on such platforms as YouTube and Spotify.

One Piece

Music Symphony

Saturday, October 25 | 7 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater



One Piece, the manga-inspired TV series that has run for 25 years and more than 1,000 episodes, follows the adventures of Monkey D. Luffy, captain of the Straw Hat Pirates, as he searches the Grand Line, a turbulent sea, for a mythical treasure known as the "One Piece," which would allow Luffy—who is made of stretchable rubber as a result of unintentionally eating Gum-Gum Fruit—to supplant the summarily executed Gold Roger as the ultimate King of the Pirates. If you can follow those surreal goings on, then you've got to be a real fan of manga, which is the word for highly stylized and imaginative comic books or graphic novels that originate in Japan. *One Piece,* which was originally a manga, became a media franchise that involves anime films, trading cards, video games and now an immersive concert experience. Audiences at *One Piece* will see scenes from the TV series projected onto a giant screen and accompanied by a synchronized score—performed live by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra—written by acclaimed composer Kohei Tanaka. | *Family at Dr. Phillips Center supported by Experience Kissimmee.*

TwoSet Violin

With Sophie Druml, Piano

Sunday, October 26 | 3 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall | VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE



Classical music has a reputation for being stuffy. But if it didn't have that tendency, what would be the fun of a deconstruction outfit like TwoSet Violin? Taiwanese-Australian pals Brett Yang and Eddy Chen, who studied together at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University in Brisbane, have taken the teachings of the academy and turned them on their head, resulting in an act that incorporates all sorts of knowing silliness. When they aren't playing the same violin simultaneously, they're sawing away on individual instruments while blindfolded or hula hooping. And that's not to mention their topical remakes of music's greatest historical works, among them "Vivaldi Winter, But There's Global Warming." Yang and Chen made their names on YouTube, where they swiftly built up an international audience with their physical stunts and hot takes on the excesses of the classical canon. Their first tour, in 2017, was entirely crowdfunded; their current global trek, which has been ongoing for more than two years, has taken the duo (with accompanying pianist Sophie Druml, who contributes to their YouTube presentation as Sophie Oui-Oui) to cultural centers from Berlin to Hong Kong.

Andrés Cepeda

Wednesday, October 29 | 8 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE



Colombian singer-songwriter Andrés Cepeda—who has been nominated for 13 Latin Grammys, winning four—is known for his emotive Latin pop, rock and romantic ballads. Born in Bogotá, he began his musical journey as lead vocalist of the Latin rock-pop band Poligamia before launching his storied solo career. Over more than three decades, Cepeda has released an unbroken string of hit singles and highly regarded albums, including *El Carpintero, Día Tras Día* and the multiplatinum *Lo Mejor Que Hay En Mi Vida*. Cepeda's collaborations have spanned a range of Latin music stars, and he's also known for his role as a coach on the singing competition show *La Voz Colombia*. He remains the only artist to have filled the Movistar Arena in Bogotá—the largest stage in Colombia—for five consecutive nights. He also performed a sold-out show at Carnegie Hall during a U.S. tour in 2020.



BREAKING TRADITION:

Distinguishing American Stained Glass

On View October 14, 2025

An exhibition exploring how nineteenth-century artists reimagined stained glass, transforming a centuries-old tradition into an American art form.

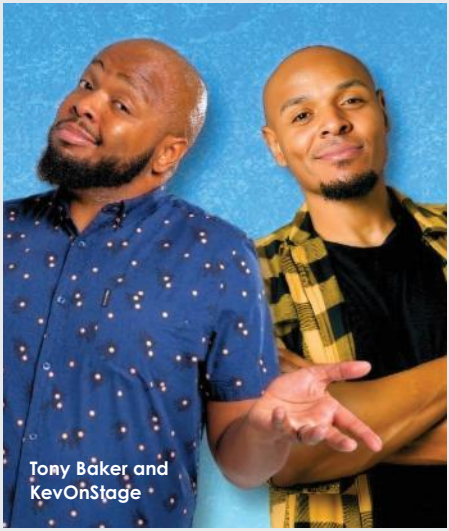
THE CHARLES HOSMER
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of American Art

morsemuseum.org

Bald Brothers

KevOnStage and Tony Baker

Sunday, November 2 | 7 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater


Tony Baker and KevOnStage

Tony Baker and KevOnStage—podcasters otherwise known as the Bald Brothers—have built a huge following with their raw and relatable reflections about current events, pop culture and personal experiences. Baker, a stand-up comic based in Chicago, has performed at the hottest comedy clubs around the country and entertained millions with his viral voiceover videos on social media. A finalist on NBC's *Last Comic Standing* in 2015, Baker debuted his own comedy special, *Scaredy Cat*, in 2018 on iTunes and Google Play. Kevin Fredericks (KevOnStage) is an actor, an author, a filmmaker and a stand-up comedian whose work has notched hundreds of millions of cumulative views across social media platforms. He has appeared on the HBO Max series *A Black Lady Sketch Show* in 2019 and hosts Will Smith's *Dad's Just Don't Understand,* which streams on Facebook and Instagram. He can also be seen in *Black Love*, which streams on Amazon Prime.

An Evening with David Sedaris

Friday, November 3 | 7:30 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall



David Sedaris is one of the most recognizable voices in American literature—by any definition of the term. With such bestselling essay collections as *Me Talk Pretty One Day* and *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*, he has made his name synonymous with social commentary and sardonic autobiographical stories—sharing his insecurities and idiosyncrasies for all to hear. Readings of his own work on NPR and *CBS Sunday Morning* have brought Sedaris even closer to his audience, making them feel like intimate co-conspirators in his ongoing struggle to define the parameters of basic sanity. And the intelligentsia agrees, having awarded him the Thurber Prize for American Humor and elevated him to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Sedaris's most recent published work, 2022's *Happy-Go-Lucky*, debuted at No. 1 on *The New York Times* nonfiction list. Opined reviewer Henry Alfond: "It's a neat trick that one writer's preoccupation with the odd and the inappropriate can have such widespread appeal." On his current tour, Sedaris reads all-new material, after which he'll take questions from the audience and sign copies of his books. He says that talking to fans sometimes provides him with fodder for future writings—so being on your strangest behavior couldn't hurt.

The Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra Presents

Gil Shaham Returns

Saturday & Sunday, November 8 & 9
7:30 p.m. (Saturday), 2:30 p.m. (Sunday)
Steinmetz Hall

The Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra has already begun its 2025–26 season, which will feature an exciting lineup of iconic works and renowned guest artists across its Classics Series and Pops Series. Up next will be internationally acclaimed violinist Gil Shaham, who will play Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto,* written in 1910, and Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler,* written in 1934. Coleridge-Taylor, a mixed-race composer from the U.K., wrote his *Violin Concerto* as a tribute to American violinist Maud Powell, a friend and colleague who was responsible for the violin transcriptions of his original piano works and was an advocate for his compositions in a genre that was not always welcoming to nonwhite composers. Hindemith, from Germany, wrote *Mathis der Maler* as an orchestral work that he would later incorporate into an opera based on the life of painter Matthias Grünewald. Shaham, a graduate of the Juilliard School, has appeared as a soloist with symphony orchestras all over the world. Also on the program—and under the baton of Music Director Eric Jacobsen—will be the orchestra's performance of Johannes Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn, Op. 56a*, and a second work, Dylan Hall's *Scherzo for Orchestra.* So you've never heard of Dylan Hall? You probably will, eventually. He's just 17 years old and was a 2023 winner of the Orlando-based National Young Composers Challenge. Subsequent performances during the orchestra's season will include *Home for the Holidays* (Saturday, November 29, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m., see page 41). Next will be *Defying Gravity: Blockbuster Broadway* (Saturday, January 10, 2026, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m.); *Debussy's La Mer* (Saturday and Sunday, January 24 and 25, 2026, 7:30 p.m. on Saturday and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday); *Brahms Symphony No. 1* (Saturday and Sunday, February 28 and March 1, 2026, 7:30 p.m. on Saturday and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday); *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial in Concert* (Sunday, March 14, 2026, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m.); *Cirque Musica: Heroes and Villains* (Saturday, May 23, 2026, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m.); and *Scheherazade* (Saturday and Sunday, June 6 and 7, 2026, 7:30 p.m. on Saturday and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday). All concerts are in Steinmetz Hall.





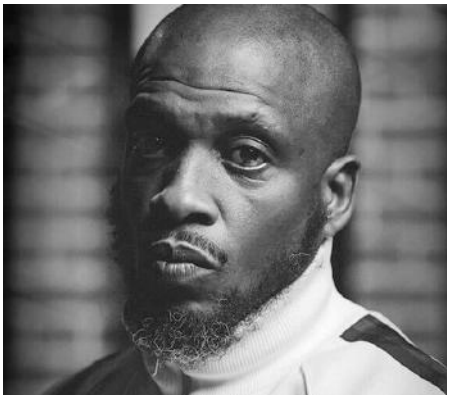
Violinist Gil Shaham (above) will headline the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra's next concert. The orchestra is led by Music Director Eric Jacobsen (below).

PHOTO BY CHRIS LEE (SHAHAM)

Ali Siddiq (16+)

In the Shadows

Walt Disney Theater
Friday, November 14 | 7 p.m.
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE



Ali Siddiq, a Houston-based comedian and public speaker, developed his raw, narrative style of comedy while he was imprisoned for drug trafficking in Texas—and found that his ability to lighten the mood and make other inmates laugh was a valuable skill under the circumstances. After serving his time, Siddiq began performing at open-mic nights and later appeared on BET's *Comic View* and HBO's *Def Comedy Jam*. He then hit the road as the opening act for comedian D.L. Hughley and notched more appearances on TV. In 2010, Siddiq released his debut comedy album, *Talking Loud Saying Something*, which marked his transition from telling jokes to telling stories. Recalls Siddiq: "The way I sounded and the way I delivered, I was like 'this is going to be the blueprint of my transition." As his star rose, Siddiq released one of his most intriguing TV projects, *It's Bigger Than These Bars*, which was filmed at the Bell County Jail in Belton, Texas, and aired on Comedy Central in 2018. The special included Siddiq performing for an audience of inmates interspersed with footage of his discussions with smaller groups of incarcerated men and women in their cells in addition to jail administrators. In 2024, Siddiq released a four-part series of comedy specials, *The Domino Effect 1-4*, which now boasts a cumulative 40 million views on YouTube. Although he hasn't lost his sharp edge, Siddiq devotes significant time to good causes, including service as a volunteer for the Harris County (Texas) Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program.

Dog Man: The Musical

Friday & Saturday, November 14 & 15
Three Shows, Various Times
Steinmetz Hall



Based on the bestselling series of children's books by Dav Pilkey, *Dog Man: The Musical* is a hilarious and heartwarming production that follows the adventures of Dog Man—with the head of a dog and the body of a police officer—who fights crimes and chews on the furniture. But while trying his best to be a good boy, can Dog Man save the city from Flippy the Cyborg Fish and his army of Beasty Buildings? Can he catch Petey, the world's most evil cat (which is really saying something), who has cloned himself to seek revenge on the doggy do-gooder? Find out in *Dog Man: The Musical,* which *Newsday* describes as "a howling good time." Your kids will know the work of Pilkey, who also created *Captain Underpants* and *Cat Kid Comic Club*. The show is recommended for ages 6+. | *Family at Dr. Phillips Center supported by Experience Kissimmee.*



America

The Encore Tour 2025

Sunday, November 16 | 7 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE

In the desert, you *can* remember their names—even if it really has been 55 years since Dewey Bunnell, Dan Peek and Gerry Beckley formed a folk-rock band that they called America. Ironically, when the three met, their fathers were members of the U.S. Air Force and were stationed with their families in London. Bunnell later recalled: "We named the band America because we didn't want anyone to think that we were an English band trying to sound American." Within a few years, America's radio-friendly songs had become ubiquitous on both sides of the pond, with such now-iconic pop blockbusters as "A Horse with No Name," I Need You," "Ventura Highway," "Tin Man," "Lonely People" and "Sister Golden Hair." The band won a Grammy for Best New Artist in 1972 and was nominated for Best Pop Vocal Group in 1973. Peek, who stepped away in 1977 to pursue a successful career in contemporary Christian music, died in 2011. But Beckley and Bunnell, supported by a rotating cast of back-up musicians, continued to tour and, with little fanfare, to release new albums. In fact, America placed its final song on the Billboard Hot 100 ("The Border," which reached No. 32) all the way back in 1983. But that hardly mattered to fans—boomers, mostly, as well as their kids and grandkids—who've continued to pack the band's concerts regardless. Beckley retired from one-nighters (but not from writing and recording) in 2024. Consequently, a lone original member, the indefatigable Bunnell, is fronting America's nostalgia-laden *Encore Tour*. He's being backed, this time around, by Dave Williams (guitar, percussion), Andy Howard (bass, vocals), Rick Steckel (drums) and John T. Miller (keys, vocals). Beckley and Bunnell, now both 73, are the subject of a new documentary, *I Need You: 53 Years of the Band America*, which takes viewers backstage as the two surviving founders say goodbye to a lifetime together on the road. The film is currently making the rounds at festivals this year after winning the Audience Award at Newport Beach Film Festival for "Best Music Film."



Mark Tremonti

Tremonti Sings Sinatra

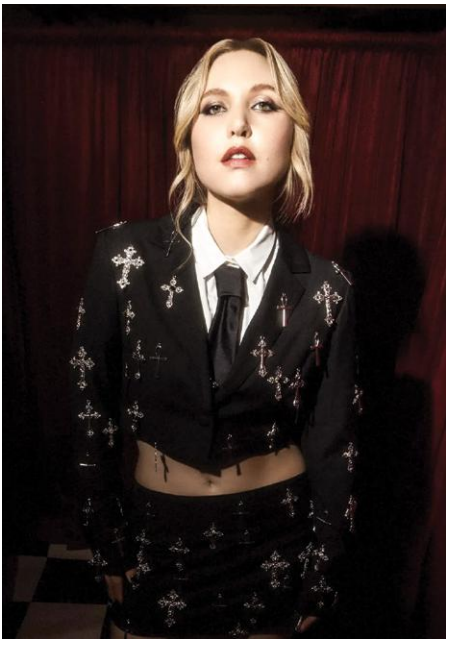
Thursday, December 4 | 8 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater

Wait a minute. Did we mean Mark Tremonti, former guitarist and vocalist for the post-grunge band Creed and currently a member—alongside a couple of his former Creed bandmates—of the equally hard-rocking Alter Bridge? The guy who was named "Guitarist of the Decade" by *Guitar World* and was ranked No. 4 on *Total Guitar*'s list of the greatest heavy metal guitarists of all time? Yes, we meant *that* Mark Tremonti, who as a teenager lived in Central Florida and attended Lake Highland Prep before graduating from Florida State University and becoming one of the most acclaimed axe men of the 2000s. Now a Windermere resident, Tremonti won a 2000 Grammy for Best Rock Song ("With Arms Wide Open," a No. 1 hit for Creed) and has notched gold and platinum albums with Creed and Alter Bridge. His eponymous band, "Tremonti," performed its first live gig in 2012 at The Social in Orlando and released its fifth studio album in 2021. Most recently, Tremonti (the person, not the band) has assembled a group of A-list musicians who had worked with the Chairman of the Board and cut *Mark Tremonti Sings Frank Sinatra,* an album of 14 covers, among them "Fly Me to the Moon," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "My Way" and "You Make Me Feel So Young." All proceeds from the 2022 collection—which topped the Billboard Jazz Albums chart—go to the National Down Syndrome Society through Tremonti's nonprofit, Take a Chance for Charity. (Tremonti and his wife, Victoria Rodriguez, have a daughter, Stella, with Down syndrome.) "Frank Sinatra raised more than a billion dollars for charity, and that's a fact I wish the public knew more about," says Tremonti, who brought his Sinatra show to the arts center last year. "Beneath his cool and calm persona, he had a big heart. This project was the start of a new purpose that I'll have for the rest of my life." The legendary shredder is getting great reviews as a crooner. Raves *Distorted Sound*: "In a love letter to his musical hero and his incredible daughter, Mark Tremonti has created a beautiful rhapsody which is nothing short of intoxicating perfection from beginning to end."

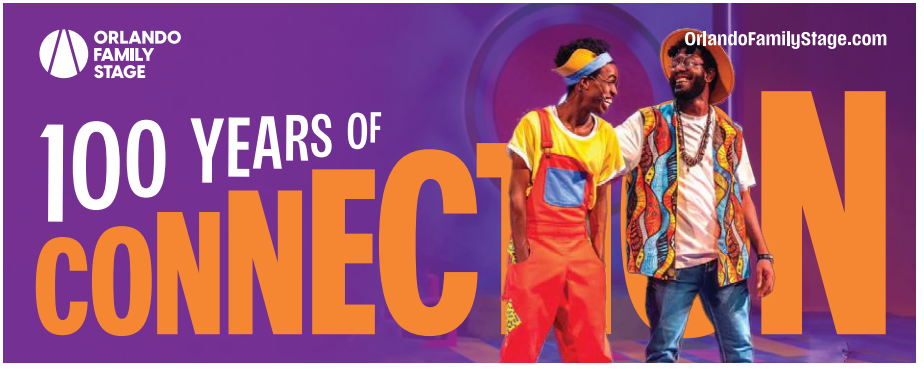
Taylor Tomlinson

The Save Me Tour

Friday and Saturday,
December 5 & 6 | 7 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater



Not everyone walks away from a late-night TV gig to concentrate on a stand-up career. Usually, in fact, it's the other way around. Yet that's exactly what Taylor Tomlinson did last March, when she announced her intention not to return for a third season of *After Midnight* on CBS. That Tomlinson was able to make such a momentous career decision without much apparent second-guessing says volumes—about the state of network TV, perhaps, but more so about the 31-year-old's remarkable success as a live performer and the resilience and self-determination that are making it happen. During her relatively short career (about 12 years), she has starred in three full-length Netflix comedy specials, been named to *Forbes* magazine's "30 Under 30" list, was a presenter at the Tonys and packed Radio City Music Hall—twice. In 2023, she was the only woman among the 10 highest-grossing comics on the road. A key to Tomlinson's wide appeal is how she masterfully walks a tightrope between textbook millennial oversharing and genuine sad-sack vulnerability that's relatable to every demographic. Casual flings don't go well for her, she admits, "because I have this round, wholesome face that people think they should build a life with." Tomlinson, who in 2024 opened up about her bisexuality, says she prefers being single and proclaims that not dating simply ensures that "nobody is going to make me cry today except me." Tomlinson has been performing comedy since she took a class in stand-up with her dad at age 16. She began her career in earnest at age 19 by playing the Christian comedy circuit—mostly church basements and coffee shops—which she found mostly warm and accepting until her material started to, shall we say, evolve beyond the parameters of the faith-based genre. She remembers one gag in particular that got her into hot water: "I am like a wild animal in bed—way more afraid of you than you are of me."



Nurse Blake (18+)

But Did You Die?

Tuesday, December 9 | 8 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE



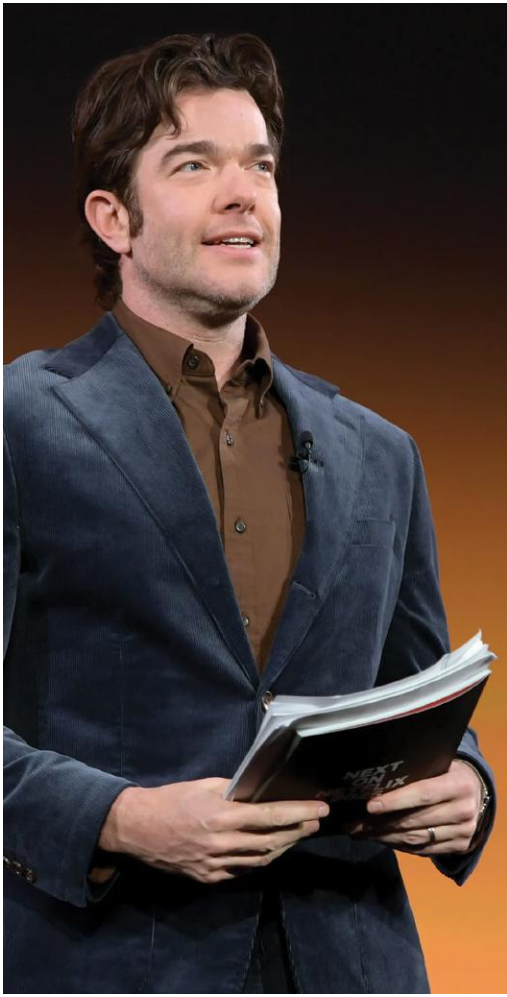
Blake Lynch's comedy resonates so strongly with nurses because he was a comrade in scrubs during his pre-comedy career in healthcare and draws his routines from real life. "I always wanted to be a nurse," Lynch says. "I *am* a nurse. Nurse Blake isn't a character—I consider him to be me." Lynch grew up in Sanford and attended Seminole High School and then Seminole State College before earning his bachelor's degree in nursing from UCF's College of Nursing in 2014. His first job was in patient transport at AdventHealth. Then he was off to Houston and Texas Medical Center, where he served as a surgical assistant and a clinical tech in the ICU. In 2017, after a stressful day, he had a panic attack while driving home. "I needed an outlet," recalls Lynch. It started as a joke: What would it look like if drab scrubs met the fashionable romper? The result, he explained in a video—which was barely more than a minute and a half long—would be the "scromper," a kind of healthcare onesie that its creator cheekily modeled while dancing. Lynch's then-husband, Brett Donnelly—the two were recently divorced—recorded the proceedings on his cell phone and the couple posted it on Lynch's previously little-noticed "Nurse Blake" Facebook and YouTube pages. The video went viral and quickly notched hundreds of thousands of views—now the count has topped 3 million—as well as thousands of comments. He decided to take the plunge and pursue comedy full time in 2019. So, is Lynch's show just for nurses? He insists that no medical background is needed to enjoy Nurse Blake. "Sometimes it's even more funny when an audience member doesn't get every insider reference," he notes. "I do a lot of audience interaction, so I get to explain it to them—and that can be a blast." Here's one insider reference that probably doesn't require an explanation. When Blake was a nurse, and was confronted with unreasonable complaints from difficult patients, he would respond: "But did you die?"



John Mulaney

Mister Whatever

Wednesday & Thursday,
December 10 & 11 | 8 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater
VIP PACKAGE AVAILABLE



Chicago-born John Mulaney was already a stand-up comedy superstar with five top-rated TV specials (and three Primetime Emmys) to his credit. Then he decided to sit down and host a live Netflix talk show—complete with a couch and celebrity guests. *John Mulaney Presents: Everybody's in L.A.*, which was described by debut guest Jerry Seinfeld as "the weirdest show I have ever been on," ran for six episodes in 2024 and was followed in 2025 by *Everybody's Live With John Mulaney*, which *Variety* cheekily praised as being "consistently delightful chaos" with its eclectic roster of guests that included Joan Baez, Tracy Morgan, Henry Winkler and talk-show legends Jimmy Kimmel, David Letterman and Conan O'Brien. Mulaney—the son of Yale-educated lawyers—began his career shortly after graduating from Georgetown University in 2008 with a degree in English. He was an office assistant at Comedy Central before he caught on as a writer at *Saturday Night Live*, where he helped create some of the show's most memorable characters—among them Bill Hader's "Stefon." (Hader could rarely get through a Stefon sketch without cracking up, partly due to unexpected script changes inserted by Mulaney specifically to throw Hader off his stride.) The fresh-faced Mulaney has been open about his drug addiction and subsequent recovery, which he credits to the intervention of his wife, actress Olivia Munn, and such friends as Seth Meyers and Fred Armisen. The unvarnished *Baby J*, Mulaney's most recent Netflix special, earned 2023 Emmy nominations for Outstanding Variety Special (Pre-Recorded) and an Emmy win for Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special. *The Atlantic* noted of *Baby J*: "There's undoubtedly a lot more weight on Mulaney's shoulders, and more retrospection in his storytelling. But few comedians are currently working with his kind of natural talent." Mulaney has hosted *SNL* six times and co-hosted the iconic show's 50th anniversary special with Steve Martin. Now a father of two daughters with Munn (who has battled breast cancer), Mulaney joked on *SNL* last year about the unequal division of parenting labor in the couple's household: "My wife takes care of the 5-week-old, and I take the 2-year-old out," he noted. "And that's not fair. That's not an equal distribution of labor at all. Saying, 'You have the 5-week-old, I'll take the 2-year-old.' That's like saying, 'You transport this convict across state lines, I'll hold this potato.'"

Sal Vulcano (16+)

Everything's Fine Tour

Sunday, January 11, 2026 | 5 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall



You likely know Sal Vulcano—an improvisational and stand-up comedian from Staten Island—as a member of The Tenderloins, a comedic troupe that also includes James Murray, Brian Quinn and, formerly, Joe Gatto. Along with the other members of The Tenderloins, Vulcano stars in *Impractical Jokers*, a series that has run for 13 seasons on TruTV.(Each episode begins with a satirical content alert: "Warning: The following program contains scenes of graphic stupidity among lifelong friends who compete to embarrass each other." In 2024, Vulcano released his first solo stand-up special, *Terrified*, on YouTube. During the show, which has racked up some 2 million views so far, he leads fans on a personal journey through the fears (sometimes irrational ones) that have plagued him as a child and an adult. "That is why I am who I am," says Volcano. But the new tour, *Everything's Fine*, reveals another aspect of the comedian's persona. "For the first time onstage, I'm talking about my family, my life, my wife, kid, things like that," says Vulcano. "So, this is a side of me and things about me people have never heard or really seen."

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Renée Fleming

Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene

Tuesday, January 20, 2026
7:30 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall

Steinmetz Hall has hosted a variety of acts but was built with such artists as Renée Fleming in mind. One of the most celebrated operatic sopranos in a generation, Fleming will present a multimedia recital, *Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene*, based on humanity's relationship to the natural world. She'll be accompanied only by pianist Inon Barnatan and by a vivid original film produced by the National Geographic Society. The live program was inspired by Fleming's 2021 album of the same name. (By the way, about that name: "The Anthropocene" refers to the period of time during which human activities have impacted the environment enough to constitute a distinct geological change.) Combining classical and contemporary works (some commissioned specifically for this program), *Voice of Nature* will offer an immersive journey through great mountain vistas, the habitats of wild animals and the oceans with their massive schools of fish—all of which will be accompanied by soaring vocals from a winner of five Grammys (out of 18 nominations) and a recipient of the National Medal of Arts in 2013. A Tony nominee in 2018, Fleming has acted on Broadway and in theatrical productions in London, Los Angeles and Chicago. She has also recorded songs for the soundtracks of several major films, two of which were Oscar winners for Best Picture: *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) and *The Shape of Water* (2017). Fleming has made numerous television appearances and, in 2014, became the only classical singer to have performed the National Anthem at the Super Bowl. This summer, Fleming made her directorial debut with a production of Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte* at the Aspen Music Festival and School.





Renée Fleming (top right) will be accompanied by pianist Inon Barnatan (right) in her concert based on humanity's relationship with nature.

PHOTO BY MARVIN JOSEPH (FLEMING)

Jesse Cook

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 | 8 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall



Jesse Cook—born in Paris, France, and raised in Toronto, Canada—is a virtuoso known for his mastery of flamenco guitar and his blending of various musical genres, including smooth jazz and world music. He sells out concert halls all over the world and is a three-time winner of the Canadian Smooth Jazz award for Guitarist of the Year. He has also garnered a Juno Award (the Canadian equivalent of a Grammy) as well as an *Acoustic Guitar*'s Player's Choice Award. He has released a series of 13 critically acclaimed albums since *Tempest*, his 1995 debut recording. Cook, who studied at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, had ambitions to be a composer. "I made that first album just as a lark," he says. But it sold and, to his surprise, got played on the radio, reaching No. 14 on the Billboard World Music Chart. In addition to headlining concerts and festivals, Cook has opened for such legends as B.B. King, Ray Charles and Diana Krall. He has performed with Welsh soprano Charlotte Church on *The Tonight Show* and toured with legendary Irish band The Chieftains. "I like people to go on a journey, to get lost in the music," says Cook. "It's not pop music, but for the people who do get it I hope they feel enriched by it. I make music I like to hear. In the very broadest term I compose and play world music."

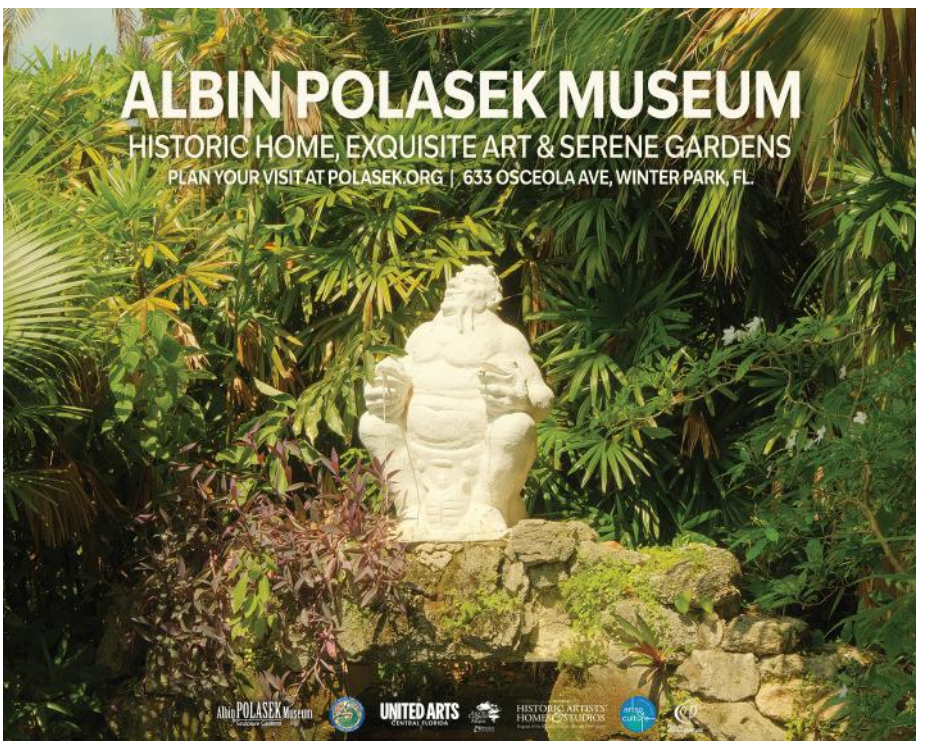




PHOTO BY RANDALL SLAVIN

Chris Botti

Thursday, February 19, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall

Trumpeter Chris Botti is a master of supercharged live performances. His set lists over the years have run the gamut—from hardcore jazz to crossover classical to rowdy rock 'n' roll. And he enjoys bantering with audiences, sharing insights about his music and even telling a joke or two (often about himself). If all that talent weren't enough, the Oregon native with the tousled blond hair was also named one of *People* magazine's 50 Most Beautiful People in 2004. (And he's still looking pretty darned good more than 20 years later.) Easy on the eye? You bet. Easy on the ear? Just ask the millions of fans who've made Botti the biggest-selling instrumental recording artist in the U.S., with four albums reaching No. 1 on Billboard's Contemporary Jazz Albums chart. His 2013 album, *Impressions*, featured guest appearances by Andrea Bocelli, Vince Gill, Herbie Hancock, Mark Knopfler, David Foster and Caroline Campbell. Showcasing such traditional favorites as "What a Wonderful World," "Over the Rainbow" and "Summertime," *Impressions* won a Grammy for Best Pop Instrumental Album. Botti, who attended the Indiana University School of Music, left college during his senior year to tour with Frank Sinatra and Buddy Rich. After a stint as a studio musician in New York, he spent a decade touring and recording with Paul Simon before becoming a featured performer on Sting's *Brand New Day* tour from 1999–2001. During his storied solo career, Botti has collaborated with PBS on *Chris Botti Live with Orchestra and Special Guests* (2006) and *Chris Botti in Boston* with the Boston Pops (2009). Artists who appeared with Botti on those star-studded TV/DVD projects included Burt Bacharach, Josh Groban, Gladys Knight, John Mayer, Katharine McPhee, Renee Olstead, Sting, Steven Tyler and Yo-Yo Ma. He returned to PBS in 2018 with *The Chris Botti Band in Concert,* which welcomed R&B singer Sy Smith and jazz and bebop singer Veronica Swift. Back in the studio in 2023, he recorded *Vol. 1* and focused on stripped-down jazz and classic standards. So expect to hear Botti and his six-member (give or take) ensemble perform a selection of cuts from the album—which was produced by David Foster—that will almost certainly include "Old Folks," the album's first single. Other timeless tunes from *Vol. 1* include "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered," "Danny Boy," My Funny Valentine," "Someday My Prince Will Come" and "Two for the Road." But Botti usually has a surprise or two up his sleeve (or on his albums): the new collection also includes a cover of "Fix You" by Coldplay. I *Part of Morgan Stanley Moments at Dr. Phillips Center.*

Peppa Pig

My First Concert

Friday, April 17, 2026 | 6 p.m.
Steinmetz Hall



Peppa Pig, along with Mummy Pig, Daddy Pig, George and Evie (a new baby sister) are the porcine protagonists of *Peppa Pig: My First Concert*—a fun, interactive introduction to live orchestra designed for children age 18 months and older. Your kids can join Peppa and George to learn about the different sounds that instruments make together and enjoy some of their favorite music (some of it classical, such as Rimsky--Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee*) interspersed with such kiddie classics as "The Bing Bong Song" from the U.K.-made TV series that airs on Nick Jr. Mummy and Daddy Pig are actually full-size humans in costume, while Peppa and George are wheeled puppets on bouncy springs—all the better for jumping in muddy puddles. And the actors have the voices (and the snorts) down pat. There's also a series of books based on Peppa Pig, one of which, *Peppa Meets the Queen*, was written specifically to coincide with Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee. And (local audiences will certainly appreciate this) there are Peppa Pig theme parks in England, Italy and Germany. Peppa Pig may appear to be more of a European phenomenon, but Central Floridians know better than most that animals wearing clothing is a universally beloved concept. | *Family at Dr. Phillips Center supported by Experience Kissimmee.*

Natalia Lafourcade

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 | 8 p.m.
Walt Disney Theater



A Mexican singer and songwriter who performs in genres such as pop, rock, jazz and folk music, Natalia Lafourcade debuted in 2002 and went on to become one of the most popular singers in Latin America. A lyric soprano, she has won 22 Grammys including 18 Latin Grammys—a record for a female artist—as well as a Billboard Latin Music Award and three MTV Video Music Awards Latin America. She began to perform with symphony orchestras in 2010, when she presented a program of traditional Mexican music for the country's bicentennial celebration with conductor Alondra de la Parra and the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas. She has packed houses at prestigious venues worldwide—including Carnegie Hall in New York City, KOKO in London and the Bataclan in Paris—and has appeared on such well-known U.S. TV and radio programs as *Austin City Limits* and NPR's *Live from Here with Chris Thile* (formerly *A Prairie Home Companion)*.

BREAKING NEWS

Some performances, including those listed below, were added after press time and didn't yet have enough details for a story. Plus, there are new shows being added daily—so for the most up-to-date information visit drphillipscenter.org to follow the arts center's social media on Facebook,YouTube and Instagram.

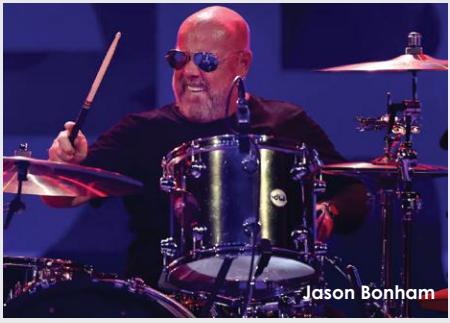
Little Shop of Horrors, October 23–November 2, various times, Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater

Orchestra Noir: The Culture 2000 Tour, Friday, October 24, 8 p.m., Steinmetz Hall

Augustin Hadelich, Wednesday, November 5, 7 p.m., Steinmetz Hall

An Evening With Phil Rosenthal of Somebody Feed Phil, Thursday, November 13, 7:30 p.m., Steinmetz Hall

Jason Bonham's Led Zeppelin Evening, Monday, November 24, 8 p.m., Walt Disney Theater


Jason Bonham

Disney's Moana: Live to Film Concert, Tuesday, November 25, 8 p.m. | *Family at Dr. Phillips Center supported by Experience Kissimmee*

Off Book: The Improvised Musical, Thursday, December 4, 8 p.m., Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater

Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons: The Last Encores, Saturday, December 13, 7 p.m., Walt Disney Theater


Frankie Valli

The Sleeping Beauty, Friday, January 2, 2026, 7 p.m., Steinmetz Hall

Stella Cole, Tuesday, December 30, 7 & 9 p.m., Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater

Salute to Vienna, Saturday, January 3, 2026, 7:30 p.m., Steinmetz Hall


Alexander Malofeev

Alexander Malofeev, Tuesday March 3, 2026, 7 p.m., Steinmetz Hall

Playstation™: The Concert, Saturday, March 14, 2026, 7:30 p.m., Walt Disney Theater

Seong-Jin Ho, Thursday April 9, 2026, 7:30 p.m., Steinmetz Hall

COMING TO Judson's LIVE

Below are some of the performances scheduled for Judson's Live as of press time. New events are added regularly, so check drphillipscenter.org, Facebook: Judson's Live or Instagram: judsonslive.

Jarred Armstrong, **Thursday, October 9, 7 & 9 p.m.** A triple-threat on piano, vocals and saxophone—the St. Pete native mixes jazz, soul and R&B.

Kaleta & Super Yamba Band, **Sunday, October 12, 4 & 6 p.m.** Led by Afrobeat legend Leon "Kaleta" Ligan-Majek, the band blends the raw energy of Afrobeat and Juju with psychedelic funk.

The Arcadian Wild, with Fielder, **Tuesday, October 14, 7 & 9 p.m.** The three-piece indie folk-pop group from Nashville blurs the lines between chamber folk and progressive bluegrass.

Lavon Rushing, **Thursday, October 16, 7 p.m.** The bassist and bandleader is known for musical versatility, from gospel and hard funk, to rock, jazz and progressive R&B.

Will Patrick: Night of the Guitar Gods: The Music of Pink Floyd, **Friday & Saturday, October 17 & 18, 7 & 9 p.m. (Friday), 6 p.m. (Saturday).** The guitarist pays homage to the legendary band behind classics like "Wish You Were Here," "Time," "The Great Gig in the Sky" and more.

Tinsley Ellis, **Sunday, October 19, 5 & 7:30 p.m.** The Atlanta-based guitarist has drawn comparisons to Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson and Leo Kottke.

Ben Sollee, **Wednesday, October 22, 7 p.m.** The Kentucky-based musician and composer blends American folk, soul and global Southern influences with his signature cello-driven sound.

Caity Gyorgy, **Thursday, October 23, 7 & 9 p.m.** The Canadian vocalist makes her Judson's Live debut with a vibrant voice rooted in bebop, swing and the timeless charm of the Great American Songbook.

Steeln' Peaches, **Friday & Saturday, October 24, 7 & 9 p.m. (Friday), 6 & 9 p.m. (Saturday).** Exciting young Florida artists channel the founding fathers of Southern rock in this Allman Brothers Band revue project.

Juan Fernando Velasco, **Sunday, October 26, 5 & 7:30 p.m.** The Ecuadorian singer, songwriter and musician blends heartfelt lyrics with the soulful strains of classical guitar and traditional Andean folk instruments.

Yasmin Williams, **Tuesday, October 28, 7 & 9 p.m.** One of instrumental music's rising stars makes her Judson's Live debut with music that redefines the boundaries of acoustic guitar.

Flashback Fright: '80s Dance Party Featuring Beauty & the Beats, **Friday, October 31, 7 p.m.** A retro Halloween dance straight out of the decade when "Thriller" ruled the airwaves and Freddy Krueger haunted our dreams.

Ella & The Bossa Beat, **Saturday & Sunday, November 1 & 2, 6 & 9 p.m. (Saturday), 5 & 7:30 p.m. (Sunday).** The father/daughter ensemble have placed two albums on the Latin and Jazz charts.

Edmar Castañeda Quartet, **Tuesday, November 4, 7 & 9 p.m.** The Latin Grammy-nominated harpist flips the script on the jazz harp with a sound that blends soul, swing and Latin rhythms.

Morgan James: Soul Remains Tour, **Wednesday & Thursday November 5 & 6, 7 & 9 p.m.** The Juilliard-trained singer-songwriter weaves elements of '90s R&B with timeless soul music.

Jai' Eagle, **Friday, November 7, 7 & 9 p.m.** Blending influences of Southern gospel and R&B, the Miami-based singer has been dubbed "The Vibe Dealer."

Sarah Reich: Tap Into Rhythm, **Saturday, November 8, 6 & 9 p.m.** The performer and choreographer takes percussive dance to a higher level, incorporating tapping with live instrumentation.

Oklahoma Stackhouse, **Sunday, November 9, 5 & 7:30 p.m.** The Orlando-based band's style has been dubbed "Southern Tropical Rock," combining elements of ska, rock, reggae, blues, jazz and funk.

Charlie Hunter Trio, **Tuesday & Wednesday, November 11 & 12, 7 & 9 p.m.** The innovative guitarist, joined by his trio, has built a genre-defying body of work that seamlessly blends jazz, funk and blues with groove-heavy improvisation.

NaturalPhil's Drum and Spin Show, Thursday, November 13, 7 p.m. With high-energy drumming paired with his live turntable or "spinning" prowess, NaturalPhil (Phil Johnson) brings presents a multimedia one-man show.

Gabrielle Cavassa, Saturday, November 15, 6 & 9 p.m. Winner of the International Sarah Vaughan Jazz Vocal Competition, Cavassa has been hailed by *Downbeat* as "a young singer with a deep, rich and fragile voice—a star in the making."

Tony DeSare, Friday, November 14, 7 & 9 p.m. The jazz singer, pianist and composer combines infectious joy and old-school cool with a nod to the Great American Songbook.

Robert Glasper, Thursday, Friday & Saturday, November 20, 21 & 22, 7 & 9 p.m. The Grammy-winning pianist and composer celebrates the 20th anniversary of *Canvas*, his debut album with Blue Note Records.

Life on Mars, Friday, November 28, 7 p.m. The versatile band offers distinctive arrangements of songs by the likes of Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Tom Petty, David Bowie, Fleetwood Mac, U2 and Johnny Cash.

The Po' Ramblin Boys, Saturday, November 29, 7 & 9 p.m. The Grammy-nominated bluegrass band makes its Judson's Live debut with high, lonesome harmonies that cut straight to the heart.

Svetlana: Holiday Swing, Sunday, December 14, 5 & 7:30 p.m. See page 39.

Holiday Heartstrings: A CeCe Teneal Experience, Saturday & Sunday, December 20 & 21, 6 & 9 p.m. (Saturday), 5 & 7:30 p.m. (Sunday). The popular soul singer returns with two evenings of holiday hits and more.

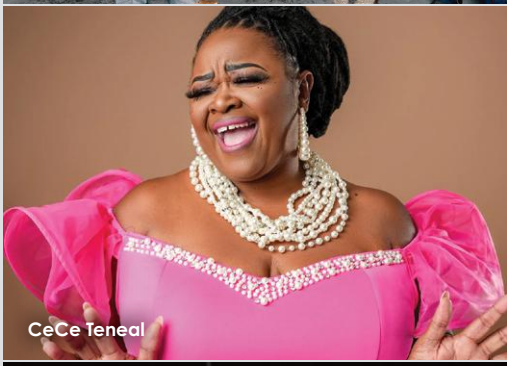
Mohini Dey, Saturday & Sunday, January 3 & 4, 2026, 6 & 9 p.m. (Saturday), 5 & 7:30 p.m. (Sunday). The bass guitarist from Mumbai is known for revolutionizing the instrument with her technical prowess and a multicultural jazz fusion style.

Fabiola Méndez, Saturday & Sunday, May 2 & 3, 2026, 6 & 8 p.m. (Saturday), 9 p.m. (Sunday). The Puerto Rican cuatrista, singer, educator and Emmy-nominated composer performs original music that focuses on the exploration of her culture, her ancestry and her identities.

Tasting with Master Sommelier George Miliotes, Explore the art of blind wine tastings with Master Sommelier George Miliotes, Upcoming events are **Sundays, November 2, December 7 and February 1, 2026, all at 1 p.m.**


Ella & The Bossa Nova Beat


The Po' Ramblin Boys


CeCe Teneal


Fabiola Méndez

WITH GRATITUDE

The Judson's Live season is supported by Frances & Peter Weldon, Dr. Marc & Nancy Sharfman & other generous donors.



Revisit painfully relatable moments during *Christmas Vacation: Conversation with Chevy Chase*—a 35th-anniversary screening of the movie followed by a talkback with the *Saturday Night Live* alum who made a household name of Clark Griswold.

HARK!

OUR STOCKINGS ARE FILLED WITH HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS.

BY STEVE SCHNEIDER AND RANDY NOLES

During the holidays, it's hard to be a Central Floridian. Your friends and family who live elsewhere are filling their social media pages with photos of overnight snowfalls and skating trips to Rockefeller Center while you're feeling like the proverbial chestnut roasting over an open flame.

Luckily, Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts can always be counted on to book an entire season's worth of concerts, dance extravaganzas and other special performances that will have you feeling neck-deep in winter wonder even if the mercury refuses to budge.

In 2025 and into early 2026, the arts center has grouped an eclectic assortment of holiday-themed shows under the umbrella "Celebrate the Holidays at Dr. Phillips Center," a series that will offer a *crème de la crème brûlée* of year-end confections. This season, in fact, will boast the most holiday shows yet in the arts center's decade-long history.

That means, starting with the week before Thanksgiving, you'll have opportunities to attend holly jolly live performances of all types that are certain to bring tidings and comfort and joy. Here's what's coming up at press time—but be sure to check drphillipscenter.org for the most up-to-date-information.

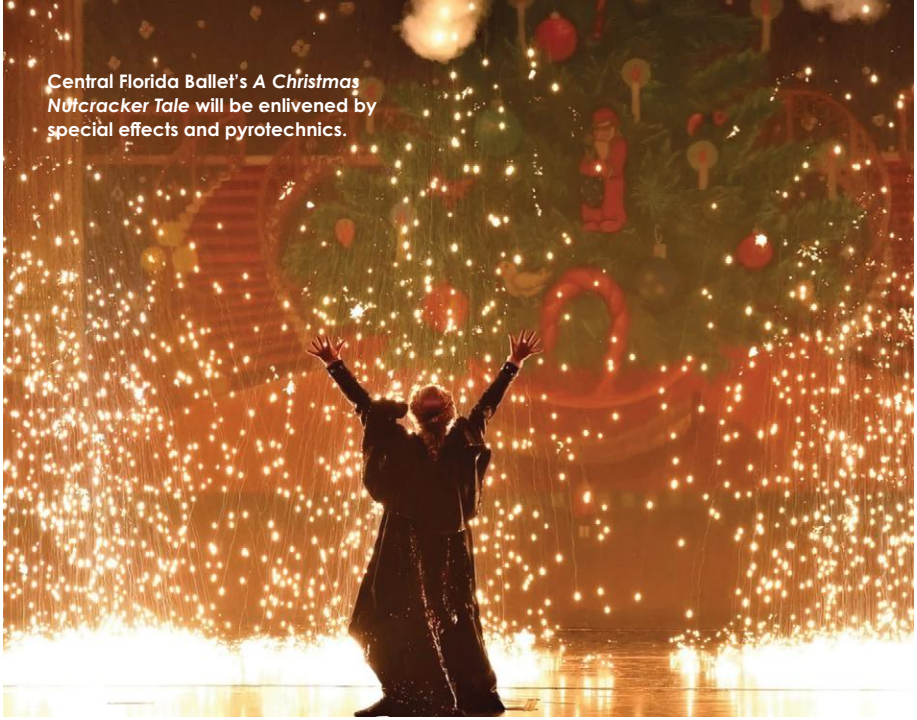
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Having successfully overhauled its traditional holiday presentation last year, Central Florida Ballet is mounting a sophomore run of its retitled, refocused **A Christmas Nutcracker Tale** (Friday, November 21, 7 p.m., and Saturday, November 22, 2 and 6 p.m., Steinmetz Hall).

In 2024, the dance company updated the Tchaikovsky classic it had been performing for more than two decades, most notably (and pointedly) by switching out the famous Russian dance segment for one that featured energetic and acrobatic folk dancing called Ukrainian Hopak.

Unchanged, however, were the jaw-dropping special effects—including dazzling pyrotechnic displays and aerial acrobatics—that garnered glowing praise in the national media for the local company's more timely and topical approach.

All that social consciousness and visual razzle dazzle will again be firmly in place for this year's edition, which—along with brilliant dancing—will feature eye-popping illuminations that highlight magical moments, fiber-optic technology that illuminates mov-



Central Florida Ballet's *A Christmas Nutcracker Tale* will be enlivened by special effects and pyrotechnics.

ing props and phosphorescent paint that accentuates scenic backdrops.

There'll even be a Sugarplum Boutique set up in the lobby where you can buy your own nutcrackers and other trinkets for the loved ones on your year-end giving list. The *Orlando Sentinel* praised *A Christmas Nutcracker Tale* as "a whiz-bang affair" with costumes and stagecraft "that enlivens the traditional tale."

Shall we go from the sublime to the (wonderfully) ridiculous? Let's do, and admit up front that what George Bailey was to the postwar baby boomers, Clark Griswold is to Generation X. We'll leave it to sociologists to sort out what this phenomenon means, but few would argue that it isn't true.

Ever since *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* was released in 1989, Griswold—the perennially overwhelmed everyman—has been a role model for those who have endured extended, unwelcome visits from obnoxious relatives or risked life and limb to install tangles of electric lights on potentially deadly pitched roofs.

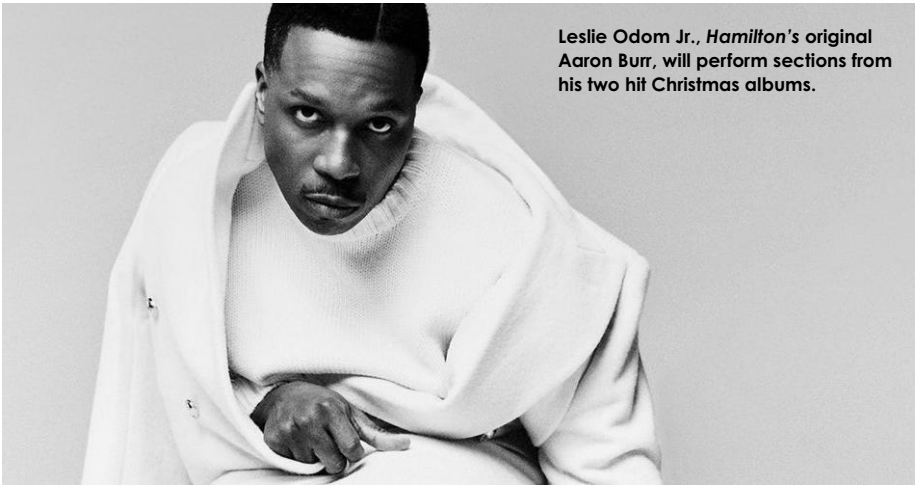
Revisit those painfully relatable moments during **Christmas Vacation: A Conversation with Chevy Chase** (Friday, November 21, 7:30 p.m., Walt Disney Theater, VIP package available), a 35th-anniversary screening of the movie—then strap in for a visit from the legendary Chevy Chase, who parlayed the inaugural season of *Saturday Night Live* into a roller-coaster film career that produced several duds, sure, but also some certified classics (*Caddyshack, Fletch, National Lampoon's Vacation* and *The Three Amigos*).

The actor and his wife, Jayni, will take the stage after the screening to share stories and secrets from the making of the movie. Chase will even take questions from the audience—which, given his well-earned, five-decade reputation for spontaneity and unpredictability, could very well be the Christmas gift that keeps on giving.

Perhaps Chase might even be inspired to repeat a memorable monologue from the film, delivered when his iconic character finally snaps emotionally, which begins: "Where do you think you're going? Nobody's leaving. Nobody's walking out on this fun, old-fashioned family Christmas. No, no. We're all in this together!"

Following Chase and Company will be multi-hyphenate superstar Leslie Odom Jr., who hasn't graced a local stage since 2023, when he played Steinmetz Hall. This season, he'll appear in the larger Walt Disney

PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAIRNS



Leslie Odom Jr., *Hamilton*'s original Aaron Burr, will perform sections from his two hit Christmas albums.

Theater with his **Christmas Tour** (Monday, December 1, 7:30 p.m.).

But really, anywhere Odom plays becomes "The Room Where It Happens." Best known to the public as the treacherous Aaron Burr in Broadway's revolutionary *Hamilton*—the role that netted him a Tony, a Grammy and an Emmy (for the show's televised version)—the Queens-born Renaissance man has earned a cacophony of kudos through celebrated roles in movies and on TV.

Odom's recording career has included two hit Christmas albums, selections from which will highlight his upcoming holiday show. He will also perform some original material and, of course, a few numbers from *Hamilton*—because he'd never throw away *that* shot.

In fact, at this writing Odom is back on Broadway reprising his career-making role in a limited engagement of *Hamilton* that ends in November. This past summer, he reunited with the original cast at the 78th Tony Awards where they performed for the show's 10-year anniversary.

From song back to dance, the third time spells even more charm for Orlando Ballet, whose **The Nutcracker** (December 5–24, multiple times and performances, Steinmetz Hall) will see some refinements to the company's $3.6 million production, which debuted to great fanfare in 2023.

This year, the company's artistic director, Jorden Morris, has tweaked the choreography in places, aiming for greater synergy between cavorting mice, flowers and folk dancers. Remaining in place will be the ornate sets, colorful costuming and other visual accouterments that have made the production a latter-day staple of the local cultural calendar.

In what has also become an annual tradition, there will be two family-friendly, sensory-friendly performances (consecutive Saturdays, December 13 and 20, 2 p.m.) that will offer a welcoming and flexible experience for youngsters—including a relaxed re-entry policy while the performance is underway.

Arrive early to enjoy festive pre-show crafts and activities (including crown decorating and snowflake making), storytimes, interactive dance classes, whimsical face painting and themed photo opportunities meant to create magical memories for children.

From dance back to song, Sarah Brightman will always be best known as the original Christine in *The Phantom of the Opera*—but the classical crossover legend has made celebrating the holidays in song a vital part of her brand, too.

There was Brightman's 2008 album, **A Winter Symphony** (also the moniker of her holiday show), a compendium of Christmas tunes both standard and contemporary that became a staple on the Billboard Top 40. Every year since 2021, she has celebrated the season by bringing a Yuletide-themed live extravaganza to stages in venues all over the world—including the arts center in 2023.

Brightman's current production (Sunday, December 7, 7 p.m., Walt Disney Theater, VIP package available) will see the English



Orlando Ballet's *The Nutcracker* will mark the third year for its rejuvenated $3.6 million production of the dance classic.

soprano backed by an orchestra, a choir and several guest vocalists to be announced. The main focus, though, will be on that remarkable vocal gift, which the *Orlando Sentinel* described as "the ability to pull a crystalline high note seemingly out of thin air."

Also no strangers to the arts center, one of the most pedigreed married couples in music will present **An Intimate Evening with David Foster and Katharine McPhee** (Friday, December 12, 8 p.m., Walt Disney Theater).

The show will be a holiday-themed extension of a series of home concerts, entitled *The Kat and Dave Show*, that the pair presented on Instagram during COVID-19, when they couldn't tour. The delightfully low-tech effort went viral (to use an unfortunately apt descriptor) and won legions of fans with its playful banter and familiar music.

In fact, the show was named one of the not-so-fondly-remembered lockdown's 10 best streaming selections by *USA Today*. Subsequently "Kat and Dave" (Foster says he hates being called "Dave") took the act on the road and made two well-received stops at the arts center.

As in past appearances, songsmith Foster will revisit some of the monster hits he has written for the likes of Chicago, Whitney Houston and Michael Bublé, while vocalist McPhee will share highlights of a career that has taken her from runner-up on *American Idol* (on which Foster, pre-romance, was a "guest mentor") to a star turn on Broadway as Jenna in *Waitress*.

And given that the duo recorded an album of Christmas favorites together just two years ago, you wouldn't be totally off-base anticipating a little jingle-bell rocking (one of the album's cuts is, in fact, "Jingle Bell Rock") as well as "A Christmas Song," "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" and "Santa Baby."

Then, for something completely different, The Vienna Light Orchestra will present its year-end spectacular **The Light of Christmas** (Sunday, December 14, 7 p.m., Walt Disney Theater).

And the title is *not* metaphorical. Thousands of flickering candles will indeed illuminate the venue as a cadre of musicians offer a breathtaking evening of holiday magic with heartwarming vocals, soaring strings and mesmerizing orchestrations.

Founder and producer Steven Canyon's troupe of instrumentalists and vocalists will deliver such beloved holiday favorites as "Ave Maria," "O Holy Night," "White Christmas" and many more. The presentation will bring together the beauty of timeless music with the theatrical artistry of some of the world's most talented performers.

The Light of Christmas is a real international affair as well, with the vocal lineup alone representing talent from seven different nations. In the offseason, performances are keyed to showtunes, the classics and the silver screen as well as a finely targeted tribute to the P.T. Barnum biopic *The Greatest Showman*.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAIRNS





And there won't be any dearth of showmanship during this holiday presentation, from the candlelit ambiance to an indulgent approach to direction that leaves musicians free to sway away in their seats as the spirit and the music move them. Don't be surprised if you find yourself following suit.

Now, how about some jazz? Like any self-respecting snowbird, the New York City jazz sensation known as Svetlana will fly south for the winter and will land in Central Florida for **Svetlana: Holiday Swing** (Sunday, December 14, 5 and 7:30 p.m., Judson's Live).

During this cozy listening session, Svetlana will augment her repertoire of jazz standards with beloved seasonal tunes.. The unifying thread will be the smooth, inviting vocal style that has rocketed the Russian-born singer's album, *Night at the Movies*, to the top of the Billboard Traditional Jazz Chart.

Svetlana—who with her band, the New York Collective, is the toast of the music scene in the Big Apple—will mark her first appearance (and likely not her last) at Judson's Live with *Holiday Swing*. Food and beverage service will start at 3:30 p.m. for the 5 p.m. show and at 6:30 p.m. for the 7:30 p.m. show.

When Christmas Day itself is in the rearview mirror but you still can't force yourself to clean up all that wrapping paper from beneath the tree, you can rush right into the waiting arms of Straight No Chaser's **Holiday Road Tour** (Saturday, December 27, 8 p.m., Walt Disney Theater).



Vocalists will offer classical, pop and swing takes on the holidays. Among them will be Sarah Brightman (top left), David Foster and Katharine McPhee (top right) and Svetlana (above).

The nine-member a cappella group, which started as a student ensemble at the University of Indiana, intends to keep the calendar stuck on December 25 for just a while longer with an exploration of the classic seasonal songbook enlivened by their trademark good-humored approach to harmonization.

In fact, Straight No Chaser has been synonymous with the holidays since 2006, when a comedic video of "The 12 Days of Christmas"—recorded eight years prior—went viral after being posted to a new platform called YouTube. The video led to a reunion of the



Straight No Chaser first gained fame with a viral (and comedic) version of "The 12 Days of Christmas."

founding members and a recording contract with Atlantic Records.

Today, the group still contains one original member—tenor Jerome Collins—and has sold more than 3 million albums (two collections have been certified gold) and 1.5 million concert tickets nationwide. About a third of its albums have been holiday focused.

So, welcome to 2026! While *The Nutcracker* may own Christmas, this year, the New Year's holiday is going to belong to another Tchaikovsky ballet: **The Sleeping Beauty** (Friday, January 2, 7 p.m., Steinmetz Hall), in which Princess Aurora falls under a magic spell of somnambulism that only the most famous kiss in fairytale lore can break.

This new staging is based on the original choreography by Marius Petipa that debuted in 1890 in St. Petersburg, Russia. It's presented by Brooklyn-based Classical Arts Entertainment, which maintains a company of professional dancers from locales as far-flung as Brazil, Japan and Kazakhstan.

Elaborate sets and costuming heighten the appeal of a theatrical wake-up call that's far more pleasant than the one you're probably used to getting on New Year's Day.

But that's still not all! If you find yourself in need of a little more holiday inspiration several weeks after the season has ended, be sure to check out Opera Orlando's **Silent Night** (Friday, February 6, 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, February 8, 2 p.m., Steinmetz Hall).

The local premiere of the Pulitzer-prize-winning modern opera—with music by Kevin Puts and libretto by Mark Campbell—recounts a miraculous moment during World War I when Scottish, French and German officers defied their superiors and negotiated a temporary truce on Christmas Eve.

This powerful work underscores the yearning, despair and—despite the brutal circumstances—hope of soldiers living in the trenches. *Silent Night* juxtaposes the jarring sounds of war with serene songs of home and hearth—and stands as a heartfelt hymn to our common humanity.

Gabriel Preisser, the company's general director, will headline a cast that also includes acclaimed soprano Julia Radosz, with music by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of conductor Bob Wood. The opera will be sung in five languages, with English and Spanish supertitles for everyone to follow along.

Silent Night, rated PG, will deliver a lesson in peace on earth and goodwill toward men that should resonate with anyone who's old enough to get it.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL

Although they aren't part of Celebrate the Holidays, per se, there are more entries on the arts center's seasonal calendar. Some are local, some are national, but every one of them effuses the spirit of the season. Here's what was booked as of press time.

• • •

Mannheim Steamroller Christmas by Chip Davis (Saturday, November 15, 7:30 p.m., Walt Disney Theater), which will mark the



The Sleeping Beauty will feature elaborate sets and dancers from far-flung locales.

return of a recording and performing juggernaut that's been, um, rolling ever forward for four decades now.

A lineup of 15 players will brandish an entire music store's worth of instruments to deliver a selection of holiday favorites made fresh via arrangements that sit at the intersection of classical, new age and rock 'n' roll. Multimedia effects will provide a visual counterpoint to the electrifying sounds

Founded by Grammy-winning songwriter and producer Davis, the act is so popular that two separate touring companies remain on the road throughout the months of November and December to meet demand.

But whichever of the ensembles makes it to the arts center, local audiences are guaranteed a rollicking night of Yuletide memories.

And is it *really* the holidays without a performance of one of the most famous works in the classical music canon? We mean, of course, George Frideric Handel's **Messiah,** for which a standing ovation is all but guaranteed. For one reason, the soaring work brings listeners to their feet through the sheer force of its power and majesty.

For another reason, it has become traditional to stand during the "Hallelujah Chorus" because King George II is said to have done so during the work's London premiere in 1743. Scholars say maybe he did, and maybe he didn't.

What isn't in doubt, however, is that Handel's magnum opus is a masterpiece of the first order. We can hear that for ourselves when the Winter Park-based Messiah Choral Society presents its 53rd consecutive local performance of the immortal oratorio (Sunday, November 16, 3 p.m., Steinmetz Hall).

And what a performance it will be. John V. Sinclair, director of music at Rollins College and artistic director of the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park, will lead a 120-voice community choir with four professional soloists accompanied by a full orchestra. Hallelujah indeed!

Admission, as always, will be free—but get there early, since seating will be first-come, first-served—and attendees are asked to bring nonperishable food items, which are donated to Second Harvest Food Bank.

Next on the roster will be a performer who truly has the world on a string. Lindsey Stirling—the dancing violinist who became a social-media sensation in 2007 and an *America's Got Talent* quarterfinalist in 2010—will twirl, high-step and leg-sweep her way through **The Snow Waltz Tour** (Wednesday, November 26, 7:30 p.m., Walt Disney Theater, VIP package available).

With her signature electronic violin in hand, Stirling will perform a selection of holiday classics as well as original songs from her new album, *Snow Waltz*, during a dazzling extravaganza complete with her trademark elaborate costuming, evocative choreography and high-energy backup dancers.

More traditional, perhaps, but every bit as entertaining will be the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra's **Home for the Holidays**: **Holidays in Hollywood** (Saturday, November 29, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m., Steinmetz Hall), which





***Clare and the Chocolate Nutcracker* (top) will offer a modern multicultural version of the familiar holiday dance, while dancing violinist Lindsey Stirling (above) will present a dazzling performance of songs from her new album, *Snow Waltz*.**

will weave a seasonal tapestry using carols and music from beloved seasonal movies, old and new.

Guest conductor Chelsea Tipton—whose resumé includes positions with symphony orchestras in Greensboro, North Carolina; New Haven, Connecticut; and Beaumont, Texas--will lead this retrospective of holidays on the big screen, with invited vocalists on hand to give the production the proper lyrical dimension. And there will be plenty of opportunities for audience participation, so you won't have to restrain yourself from singing along. There will be no judgment and no tut-tuts from other audience members.

As the holidays approach, we can never get enough of *The Nutcracker*, right? Especially if we have opportunities—as we certainly do this year—to see it manifested in a multitude of visions. For example, returning this year will be a lively multicultural take on the classic dance, **Clare and the Chocolate Nutcracker** (Saturday, November 22, red carpet event at 7 p.m. and performance at 8 p.m., Walt Disney Theater).

The production, which has been staged annually since 2012 by Orlando Community Arts—a nonprofit whose mission is to provide arts opportunities for underserved communities—will feature dazzling costumes, energetic dance scenes and guest artists who will perform alongside local youngsters.

Following her family's holiday party, Clare returns to the parlor embracing a Chocolate Nutcracker that she been given by her Aunt Pearl. She falls asleep and her dreams take her and the Chocolate Nutcracker (who has been transformed into a handsome Chocolate Nutcracker Prince) on a trip around the world.

Together with the Sugar Plum Fairy, Clare and the Chocolate Nutcracker Prince experience the pageantry of dazzling costumes and exciting dance moves of Africa, Haiti, Puerto Rico, India and many other lands



enroute to the Kingdom of Toys. Music for this bold and beautiful production will be provided by the Jones High School Alumni & Community Band.

Next, how about a *Nutcracker* with flamenco flair? That would be **Cascanueces** (Saturday, November 29, 8 p.m., and Sunday, November 30, 4 p.m., Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater) staged by Flamenco del Sol.

In *Cascanueces* (which means "nutcracker" in Spanish), Clarita will embark on a magical journey to some of the most iconic locations in Spain during a lavish production that has drawn inspiration from the Tchaikovsky score as well as from flamenco and folk dance. A cast of 30 dancers will perform choreography devised by co-directors Tammy Weber de Millar and Gabriel Garcia.

The Thanksgiving-weekend run will happily coincide with the return of FusionFest, a free event that will take place just outside the arts center on Seneff Arts Plaza. There, Flamenco del Sol plans to present a different performance that will combine trappings of *The Nutcracker* with artistic influences from Spain.

Finally, if you're seeking a reminder of the proverbial reason for the season, look no further than For King + Country's **A Drummer Boy Christmas: The Live Experience** (Tuesday and Wednesday, December 2 and 3, 7 p.m., Walt Disney Theater, VIP package available).

Touring again following a yearlong hiatus, the Australian-born duo of Joel and Luke Smallbone and their band will present a refresher course on the Christian pop sound that has netted them four Grammys, a Billboard Music Award and 13 GMA Dove Awards.

A Drummer Boy Christmas, which the brothers have been performing at holiday time for the last five years, will combine their own renditions of seasonal standards with similarly themed original numbers. (The Smallbones employed that winning formula for an album of the same name in 2020).

For King + Country is known for its explosive energy, cinematic visuals and spirit-filled storytelling that delivers a festive and faith-filled experience for the whole family. ■



***Cascanueces* (top) delivers a take on *The Nutcracker* with the flair of flamenco and with a setting in Spain. King + Country's *A Drummer Boy Experience* (above) showcases the duo's faith-based pop sound.**

PHOTO BY MIKE KITAIF (CASCANUECES)

WITH GRATITUDE

An Intimate Evening with David Foster and Katharine McPhee is supported by PNC Bank; *Straight No Chaser: Holiday Road* is part of Family at Dr. Phillips Center supported by Experience Kissimmee; *Mannheim Steamroller Christmas by Chip Davis* is part of Morgan Stanley Moments at Dr. Phillips Center.



The modern-day
Glenn Miller Orchestra

LET'S SWING INTO THE NEW YEAR

If you get pangs of romantic nostalgia when you hear the original recordings of "In the Mood," "Moonlight Serenade," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "Pennsylvania 6-5000," "String of Pearls," "Tuxedo Junction" and other timeless hits from the '30s and '40s, there's good news.

You can still hear these and other classics—performed live—by the Glenn Miller Orchestra, which will swing by Steinmetz Hall for a coveted New Year's Eve gig on Wednesday, December 31. Showtime will be 8 p.m. The orchestra, in fact, has a history of such performances—perhaps most notably a live radio broadcast from New York City that rang in 1939 with war already raging in Europe.

The present-day orchestra isn't the original, of course, but it *is* official. Miller, the hitmaking trombonist, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942 and led Glenn Miller & The Army Air Force Band, which performed more than 800 concerts to entertain the troops overseas. The bandleader was killed in 1944 in a transport plane crash over the English Channel.

But Miller's music—even his orchestra—has lived on. In 1956, with permission of the Miller estate, the re-formed Glenn Miller Orchestra presented its first concert and has been on the road ever since, attracting lovers of nostalgia as well as a new generation of fans who dig the still-obvious musical mastery of today's players.

The 18-member ensemble continues to perform original Miller arrangements from both his civilian and the military bands. "A band ought to have a sound all of its own," Miller once said. "It ought to have a personality." Current music director Erik Stabnau, a saxophonist, has kept that philosophy in mind—and knows that today's fans want unadulterated swing just as it would have been played by Miller.

"It's unfortunate that this kind of music isn't as common nowadays as it once was," says Stabnau. "The Glenn Miller Orchestra is one of the last big bands out there that's still touring on a regular basis. And I've loved every minute of it—from the music to the touring and all the different musicians I've met along the way."

Stabnau, who became the music director in 2021, joined the band in 2017 playing tenor saxophone, a role held in the original orchestra by the great Tex Beneke. The singers—John James, Catherine Sykes, and Mark Porter—add to the retro vibe both aurally and visually, and have won kudos for their vintage vocals and their authentically sleek, sophisticated stagewear.

Miller himself, who had just ascended to superstar status when Uncle Sam came calling, is remembered as a down-to-earth personality despite his undeniable musical genius. In his book *Glenn Miller & His Orchestra*, George Simon wrote:

"[Miller's] favorite author was Damon Runyon. His favorite book was the Bible. Spencer Tracy and Olivia de Havilland were his favorite movie actor and actress. His big loves were trout fishing, playing baseball, listening to good music, sleeping and money. His favorite quotation was not from the Bible, nor from Runyon, but from Duke Ellington: 'It Don't Mean a Thing If it Ain't Got that Swing!'"

The iconic bandleader would be pleased to know that this assemblage of players and singers carrying on in his name still have it in spades. ■

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Broadway Feels Whole Here

Dr. Phillips Center and AdventHealth uplift our community and set the stage for an inspiring AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando season.



Sheherazade as Glinda and Dana Cimone as Dorothy in the North American tour of *The Wiz*.

PHOTO BY JEREMY DANIEL

Since 2014, Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts and AdventHealth have partnered to inspire wellness and support Central Florida artists of all ages.

From day one, AdventHealth shared the art center's vision to deliver Arts for Every Life®. After years supporting AdventHealth School of the Arts, STROKESTRA®, the Frontyard Festival and other mission-driven programs at the arts center, it became a natural fit to include AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando in 2022.

The partnership shows how deeply AdventHealth values connecting with our shared community through the power of the performing arts.

In just over 10 seasons, the arts center has presented more than 80 Broadway productions, welcomed more than one million Broadway guests and doubled its subscriber family—making Orlando one of the nation's top Broadway destinations.

Looking ahead, the 25/26 AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando season promises even more with Tony Award® winners *The Outsiders*, *Kimberly Akimbo* and Alicia Keys's *Hell's Kitchen* alongside page-to-stage favorites *Water for Elephants* and *The Notebook*.

"At AdventHealth, caring for body, mind and spirit guides everything we do, so partnering with Dr. Phillips Center feels natural," says Tricia Edris, senior vice president and chief innovation and partnership officer for AdventHealth's Central Florida Division and an arts center board member. "Broadway in Orlando uplifts, connects and inspires, helping our community feel whole."

That impact has extended offstage, too. Patients have enjoyed backstage tours, cast members have visited AdventHealth campuses and Broadway professionals have led masterclasses that educate, energize and inspire local residents.

For many in the community, these programs mark their first exposure to live theater—opening doors to Orlando's vibrant arts and culture scene. During the magical run of Disney's *The Lion King*, three inspiring AdventHealth for Children teen patients received the surprise of a lifetime with tickets to the show and a behind-the-scenes experience that they will cherish forever.

"This was one of the best days I've ever had," shared one teen. "It was my first musical, and getting to experience it with my friends made it even more special. Things can get really overwhelming sometimes—it's a lot to deal with. But then something like this happens and you realize how kind people can be. It meant so much that someone cared enough to make this happen. This is something I will always remember."

Born from a shared commitment, Dr. Phillips Center and AdventHealth continue to elevate the arts across Central Florida, proving that when healthcare and creativity unite our community flourishes—a true testament to Arts For Every Life®. ■

ORCHESTRAL LEGENDS

THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS LINEUP YET WILL FILL STEINMETZ HALL WITH MUSIC.

BY RANDY NOLES

Riding the momentum of three sold-out seasons, the 2026 Great Orchestra Series will offer its most prestigious lineup yet with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra and, making its Central Florida debut, the Vienna Philharmonic with two different programs over two evenings. These world-class orchestras will perform, as usual, in Steinmetz Hall.

The series will open with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (Thursday, January 15, 2026), followed by The Philadelphia Orchestra (Friday, February 20, 2026) and the Vienna Philharmonic (Wednesday and Thursday, March 11 and 12, 2026). A series subscription includes a three-show package, with an option to add the second concert by the Vienna Philharmonic.

New this year: Subscribers will be invited to attend Concert Comments—pre-show talks held with members of each orchestra one hour prior to each performance.

Current subscribers were previously able to renew their subscriptions and new subscriptions are now on sale. There will also be individual tickets offered, if available, prior to each concert.

Performances will get underway for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and The Philadelphia Orchestra at 7:30 p.m. The Vienna Philharmonic will perform at 8 p.m. on Wednesday and 7 p.m. on Thursday. Here is a look at each orchestra and what guests can expect when they take their seats and the lights go down.

THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

In January 2022, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) celebrated the grand opening of Steinmetz Hall with a 10-day residency that included performances with Leon Bridges, Jennifer Hudson, Lyle Lovett, eight principal dancers from London's Royal Ballet and Winter Park's Bach Festival Choir and Orchestra. The ensemble returned that October as a season add-on for the inaugural Great Orchestra Series.

On top of that, the London-based orchestra has partnered with the arts center and AdventHealth to implement STROKESTRA®, an innovative music therapy program to aid in stroke recovery that was launched in 2015 in the U.K. and brought to the U.S. in 2022.

The program has continued to expand locally with support from AdventHealth, Florida Blue Foundation, the Pabst Steinmetz Foundation, the Aland Family, Alison and Graeme Lockwood, Ernest Hardy, Hardy Vaughn and Betty Brady, and the Hoffa Memorial Foundation.

RPO's return engagement promises to be truly special as it will celebrate the 80th birthday of legendary composer and conductor Sir John Rutter. The program, to be conducted by Rutter himself, will feature a performance of perhaps his most iconic vocal work, *Magnificat*, and a reunion with the Bach Festival Choir.

Rutter's *Magnificat,* which was written in 1990, is an extended version of the ancient Christian prayer of praise and thanksgiving



The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's breadth of work and role as a cultural ambassador for Britain have rightly earned it the nickname "The Nation's Orchestra." RPO is shown here in concert at London's Royal Albert Hall.

PHOTO BY ANDY PARADISE



RPO's return engagement promises to be truly special since it will celebrate the 80th birthday of Sir John Rutter, one of the world's most renowned living composers. Rutter himself, who conducts only on special occasions, will wield the baton.

spoken by the Virgin Mary in the Gospel of Luke. It is usually sung or chanted in vesper services and has often been set to music—including by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1723.

"I wanted to write something as absolutely different as it could be," said Rutter, whose acclaimed work was composed for choir and orchestra with a soprano soloist. "I thought, 'Let's pick something really, really joyful.'" He drew his inspiration from Latin American countries, "where the Virgin Mary is most celebrated and revered."

Along with *Magnificat*, the influential composer—who has produced and directed many of RPO's recordings, which have cumulatively sold in the millions—will wield the baton for two more of his own compositions: the festive *Celebration Overture* and the vibrant suite *Cityscapes,* both of which will mark their premieres in the U.S.

Rutter, who primarily composes choral music and is particularly renowned for his carols, is ranked among classical music's contemporary greats and has been called by one critic "the most gifted composer of his generation."

RPO, founded in 1946, is one of today's most in-demand orchestras, annually performing about 200 live concerts around the world. The globe-trotting orchestra also performs an annual season of concerts in London's Royal Albert Hall, the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall and is the resident orchestra at Cadogan Hall in Chelsea.

From recording film scores to performing for royalty to collaborating with crossover artists—opera stars and pop icons alike—RPO's breadth of work and role as a cultural ambassador for Britain have rightly earned it the nickname "The Nation's Orchestra."

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

Internationally acclaimed conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin—who has notched a Grammy win every year from 2022 to 2025—will make his Florida debut conducting The Philadelphia Orchestra as it celebrates 125 years of musical excellence.

One of the "Big Five" American orchestras, The Philadelphia Orchestra has long pushed the boundaries of convention in the classical music realm. It has presented premieres of such important works as Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* ("Symphony of a Thousand"), Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* and Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances*.

The orchestra, then conducted by Leopold Stokowski, even made film history by performing the classical-music soundtrack to Walt Disney's other-worldly animated film *Fantasia* in 1940. It also boasts a number of significant media firsts: It was the first orchestra to make electronic recordings, in 1925, and to appear on national television, in 1948.

But the ever-evolving ensemble has also performed music inspired by current events, such as Davóne Tines's *Sermon*, dedicated to the memory of Breonna Taylor; John Luther Adams's *Vespers of the Blessed Earth*, a response to humanity's impact on the planet; and Robin Holcomb's *Paradise*, inspired by the wildfires in and around Paradise, California, in 2018.

The program will encompass two intriguingly complementary works by Johannes Brahms. *Symphony No. 2*—which evokes images of blue skies and babbling brooks—was written when the composer was on vacation in the country and is sometimes called the "Pastoral Symphony."

Yet the 1887 work contains moments of melancholy. Brahms, in fact, wrote to his publisher that the work "is so melancholy that you will not be able to bear it. I have never written anything so sad, and the score must come out in mourning."

COURTESY OF NICK RUTTER





One of the "Big Five" American orchestras, The Philadelphia Orchestra has long pushed the boundaries of convention in classical music. Conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin (left) has won a Grammy every year from 2022 to 2025.

Symphony No. 4, written in 1885, is Brahms's final symphony and its moodiness is less ambiguous. One prominent musicologist wrote that "[for] the musician, there is not another modern piece so productive as a subject for study. It is like a dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back."

By the way, we previously mentioned Nézet-Séguin's Grammys: While there isn't space to elaborate on them all, there's one that's especially notable outside the world of classical music.

In 2025, he was a Grammy winner for Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media for the film *Maestro*, a biopic about Leonard Bernstein that starred Bradley Cooper, who earned an Oscar nomination for Best Actor. The film was nominated for Best Picture.

Beyond leading *Maestro's* recorded music, Nézet-Séguin served as Cooper's conducting consultant, guiding him through Bernstein's distinctive, theatrical style and, in the process, making "a friend for life" of the actor.

THE VIENNA PHILHARMONIC

Direct from the "Capital City of Music," the Vienna Philharmonic—considered to be one of the finest orchestras in the world—will make its Orlando premiere with two distinct programs over two evenings. One will feature Richard Strauss and Jean Sibelius, while the other will feature Antonin Dvořák and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

There is perhaps no other ensemble more closely associated with the rich history and tradition of European classical music than the Vienna Philharmonic, which was founded in 1842. The orchestra's stature is best illustrated by statements over time of countless

PHOTOS BY PETE CHECCIA (ORCHESTRA); LANDON NORDEMAN (NÉZET-SÉGUIN)





Direct from the "Capital City of Music," the Vienna Philharmonic is set to make its Orlando debut under the baton of guest conductor Andris Nelsons (left). The orchestra will present two distinct concerts over two evenings.

musical masters.

The controversial Wagner, for example, described the orchestra as being "one of the most outstanding in the world;" Johannes Brahms counted himself as a "friend and admirer;" and Gustav Mahler said that he was "joined with the orchestra through the bonds of musical art." Richard Strauss contended that "all praise of the Vienna Philharmonic reveals itself as understatement."

The guest conductor will be Andris Nelsons, a native of Latvia who began his career as a trumpeter in the Latvian National Opera Orchestra. He later became music director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; principal conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie in Herford, Germany; and music director of the Latvian National Opera.

Now, Nelsons serves as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and principal conductor of the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig Orchestra in addition to his frequent appearances as a guest conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic.

The Wednesday program, which is included in series subscriptions, will be an eclectic one, with Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30,* which was written in 1896 and entered popular culture after its use in the soundtrack of Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Also slated is Sibelius's *Symphonie Nr. 2 in D-Dur, Op. 43*, which was written in 1901 and known for its grandiose finale and associated by some (but not, apparently by the composer) with Finland's struggle for independence. For that reason, it is sometimes called "The Symphony for Independence."

The Thursday program, a series option,

PHOTOS BY JULIA WESLEY (PHILHARMONIC); MARCO BORGGREVE (NELSONS)

will encompass Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Symphonie Nr. 36 in C-Dur, K. 425,* which was written in 1783 and otherwise known as "Linzer," because it was written when the composer had a stopover in the Austrian town.

Also on the bill will be Antonin Dvořák's *Symphonie Nr. 6 in D-Dur, Op. 60*, written in 1880 and dedicated to Hans Richter, who was the conductor of—you guessed it—the Vienna Philharmonic. But the work was more popular in England, where a critic wrote:

"Dvořák's success in England affords matter for much congratulation. We have from him that which is new and not mischievous; that which is founded upon the natural expression of a people's musical nature. The more of Dvořák the better; therefore, the indications are that a good deal of him awaits us." ■

WITH GRATITUDE
The Great Orchestra Series is supported by Experience Kissimmee, Chuck & Margery Pabst-Steinmetz, Jody & Bill Orosz, Anil & Chitra Deshpande, Jacqueline Bradley & Clarence Otis & other generous donors.

Dr. Phillips Center Presents

THE GREAT ORCHESTRA SERIES

THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
Thursday, January 15, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.
Sir John Rutter, Conductor

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Friday, February 20, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.
Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Conductor

THE VIENNA PHILHARMONIC
Wednesday, March 11 | 8 p.m.
Strauss: Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30
Sibelius: Symphonie Nr. 2 in D-Dur, Op. 43

Thursday, March 12 | 7 p.m.
Mozart: Symphonie Nr. 36 in C-Dur, K. 425 ("Linzer")
Dvořák: Symphonie Nr. 6 in D-Dur, Op. 60
Andris Nelsons, Conductor

Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra
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COMMUNITY STAGES

PLUS: WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S COMING AT THE ARTS CENTER.



It was always intended that local and regional organizations, not just national touring acts, would use venues at Dr. Phillips Center. And they certainly do. Orlando Ballet, Opera Orlando and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra—all high-profile cultural cornerstones—usually stage their major productions at Walt Disney Theater or Steinmetz Hall.

But did you know that last year the arts center hosted performances from some 50 additional local groups? That's almost double the number that used the facilities a decade ago (when only Walt Disney Theater and Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater were open).

In fact, across the arts center's five venues—which encompass the trio of previously mentioned theaters plus Judson's Live and Seneff Arts Plaza—hometown talent accounted for 365 of the 700 performances that took place during the 2023–24 season.

Clearly the presence (and availability) of the arts center has been a game changer in the local performing-arts community. Having access to professional stages on which to strut one's stuff has raised the bar for just about everyone who has ever spoken a line, danced a step or sung a note in front of paying spectators.

Just ask Alice Peterson and Tina Evans, co-founders of Tap Into Theater Academy—a preprofessional (and tap-centric) dance school based in West Orange County—which has staged 13, soon to be 14, musicals at the 300-seat Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater.

"Being on a stage at the arts center brings our students' dreams to life," says Peterson, who has danced at The Cirque Magique and Universal Studios and is a vocalist who has performed with opera companies. "They get psyched. It helps them surpass what even they think they can do."

Evans, who has more than 20 years of experience as a teacher, a director and a choreographer, agrees. She adds that the school's students (ages 7–17) also benefit from interactions with the arts center's tech pros, whose proficiency helps them to understand that a successful show isn't only about the performers on stage.

"[The tech team] understands our vision, and their contributions have elevated our performances to levels that we could have only imagined," says Evans. "What makes them so special, in addition to their talent, is the respect that they display for us—especially since youth theater often gets overlooked by those who underestimate the ability and determination of children."

Among the shows staged by the school have *been Shrek Jr., The Music Man Jr., The Lion King Jr., Aladdin Jr.* and *Seussical Jr*. Peterson and Evans were pleased to note that audience members have included none other than the Pughs, who brought their grandchildren to see *Frozen Jr.* Says Peterson: "That moment really reminded us how far reaching and meaningful these performances can be."

Meaningful to everyone, but especially to the children basking in the spotlight. Mackenzie, age 6, says that the school's productions "have given me the opportunity to perform on a big stage and encouraged me to shine." Malena, age 14, says that she has learned how hard work truly pays off and "to take pride in my accomplishments, and then carry that pride into everything I do."

Davis, age 13, who played Horton in *Seussical Jr.,* adds: "I got to work alongside incredibly talented and creative performers and a team who cared about each of us and helped me to grow so much as an actor and a person." What could be better than that?

"From the very beginning, our promise was clear—we were building more than a performing arts center," says Kathy Ramsberger, the arts center's president and CEO.

She continues: "We were building opportunity for our entire region. A place where emerging artists and local organizations could grow, collaborate and be seen. A place where the community comes together through shared experiences and where we prove that everyone deserves access to exceptional arts opportunities—because Arts For Every Life® means arts for every community."

Standing center stage at a place like the arts center is changing lives for students at

No one could have been more excited than Hannah McGinnis (back) and Meghan Guarino (front) as they prepared to take the stage at Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater for a Tap Into Theater Academy production of *Lion King Jr*.



Displayed alongside the arts center's Grand Staircase from tier two to tier four, the History Walk—which consists of colorful, fact-filled wall hangings—guides guests through a timeline of construction milestones, grand openings, community programs and cultural firsts. It allows everyone who sees it to re-live defining moments and celebrate a story that has continued to evolve.

Tap Into Theater Academy, as well as for many hundreds of other Central Floridians of all ages who have experienced the thrill of performing in venues through which household names have passed.

You can experience it for yourself, vicariously, at the next Tap Into Theater Academy production, *Newsies Jr.,* which will take place on Thursday, December 18, at 4:30 and 8 p.m. Tickets are usually available about a month before showtime at drphillipscenter.org.

DOWNTOWN PROPERTY EXPANDS

With an eye toward expansion, the arts center has bought a pair of parcels near its 9-acre campus in Downtown Orlando. "Short-term uses for the parcels include administrative office space and guest parking while plans for future development are completed," according to the arts center's announcement.

What might that future development include? A potential new theater that seats about 800—between the capacities of Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater (300), Steinmetz Hall (1,700) and Walt Disney Theater (2,700)—has been discussed with local arts leaders.

The newly acquired land—across South Street and stretching north to Jackson Street—will add 43,948 more square feet of property. The arts center said in a statement that its $10.39 million acquisition "reflects Dr. Phillips Center's long-term vision to increase access, elevate experiences and reinforce its role as a cultural and economic anchor in the heart of Central Florida."

The larger of the two parcels, at 42 East Jackson Street, is currently home to a parking lot and a children's education building that previously belonged to First United Methodist Church of Orlando. The smaller of the two parcels, at 36 East Jackson Street, is home to a three-story office building.

The property will, according to the arts center, facilitate "new opportunities for high-impact events, free programming, arts and wellness initiatives, performances and community engagement." No public money was involved in the purchase.

Says Kathy Ramsberger, the arts center's president and CEO: "Our promise has always been to elevate arts and community. This acquisition brings us closer to completing a vision that is already thriving—positioning us to grow our cultural and economic impact."

INSTALLATION SALUTES MILESTONES

Continuing its 10th anniversary celebration, the arts center has on display a History Walk—an installation of images that honors the people, performances and progress that have

shaped the world-class cultural hub's first decade. Ticketed guests can take the journey through November 6.

There's no question that the arts center has delivered on its inspirational mission of Arts For Every Life®. The campus has hosted more than 5,000 performances and 2,700 events that have cumulatively attracted some 5 million guests. It has contributed more than $190 million annually to the local economy, and invested $22.8 million in education, accessibility, and arts and wellness initiatives.

Displayed alongside the Grand Staircase from tier two to tier four, the History Walk—which consists of colorful, fact-filled wall hangings—guides guests through a timeline of construction milestones, grand openings, community programs and cultural firsts. It allows everyone who sees it to re-live defining moments and celebrate a story that has continued to evolve.

The journey begins on tier two with the long-held vision's earliest steps, from initial funding approvals to the eagerly anticipated grand opening of the sleek glass-and-steel multivenue building.

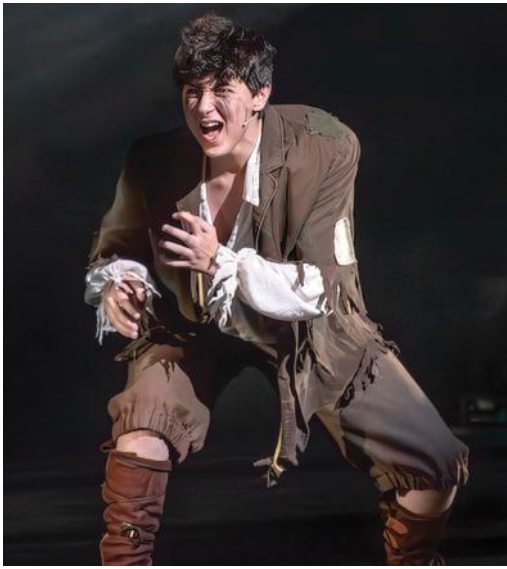
On tier three are commemorations of the debut of Steinmetz Hall, the launch of STROKESTRA® (a music-based stroke rehabilitation program for patients and their caregivers) and the gala staging of the 10th Annual Applause Awards. Tier four concludes the walk with a look at the arts center's massive impact by the numbers.

AWARD WINNER SHINES AT JIMMYS

Speaking of the Applause Awards—an arts center program that celebrates achievement in high-school musical theater—two winners were selected in May to compete in the National High School Musical Theater Awards (better known as the Jimmy Awards) in New York City.

Adam Bouchachia from Lake Nona High School in Orlando and Suliette Ortiz from Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville were the lead performers who were selected from among their peers to participate in the prestigious competition.

In June, at the Jimmys, Bouchachia, a rising junior, placed among the top four finalists for Best Performance as an Actor. He earned a $5,000 scholarship and, undoubtedly, the notice of career-making casting directors who routinely monitor the high-profile event for bright new talent.



Adam Bouchachia from Lake Nona High School was one of two applause Awards winners selected to compete at the Jimmy Awards in New York City, where he placed among the top four finalists for Best Performance as an Actor.

The Jimmy Awards, often referred to as the "Tony Awards for high school theater," featured 110 nominees from 55 regional awards programs in a one-night-only performance at Broadway's Minskoff Theatre. The competition was the culmination of an intensive weeklong regimen of rehearsals and coaching sessions with theater pros.

"Adam brought his best and truly lit up one of Broadway's biggest stages," says Ryan Simpson, the arts center's education director. "His talent, discipline and passion really stood out. We're so proud of him and excited to see all the amazing things he'll do next."

Bouchachia had been recognized at the 11th Annual Applause Awards for his standout performance as Quasimodo in his school's production of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Since its inception, the arts center's Applause Awards competition has produced 18 Jimmy nominees, with six students earning national honors and two students—Sofia Deler and Tony Moreno—named overall winners of Jimmy Awards. (Both have gone on to have successful careers as performers.) ■

STEP RIGHT UP!

LOVE UNDER THE BIG TOP IS FOLLOWED BY MYTHS, GANGS, BARDS, WIZARDS, RHYTHMS, TEENS, WEEPERS AND VENGEFUL WIVES.

BY RANDY NOLES AND STEVE SCHNEIDER

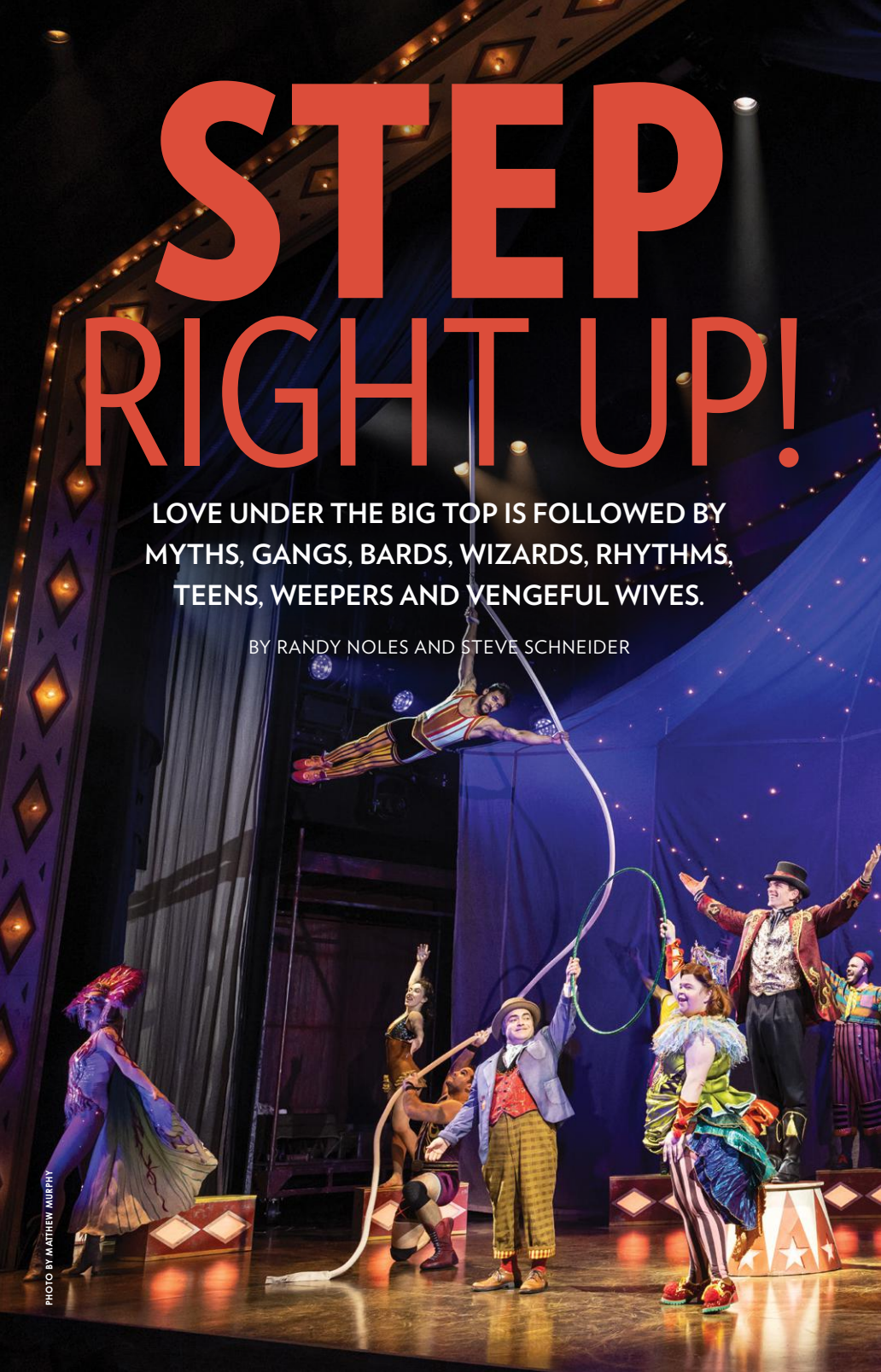


PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY



Water for Elephants **is the next show up in the 25/26 AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando season. Season subscriptions, obviously, are no longer on sale but individual tickets for shows, if available, go on sale several weeks in advance of opening night.**

And we're off! *The Wiz* has moved on down the road and the circus is coming to town for the second show in the 25/26 AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando season. Up next is *Water for Elephants,* in which the addition of a stubborn elephant to a threadbare circus brings two star-crossed lovers dangerously close together.

Following that show is a return engagement of the mythology-infused *Hadestown*, a season option, followed by the power-packed adaptation of an explosive 1967 young-adult novel, *The Outsiders*.

& Juliet, a girl-power romp that flips the script of Shakespeare's romantic weeper, precedes *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, which continues the story of the erstwhile Boy Wizard—now an adult with a son who, like his father before him, faces unexpected (and existential) dangers at Hogwarts.

Then it's back to the gritty real world of New York City in the '90s with *Hell's Kitchen*, the semi-autobiographical musical from superstar Alicia Keys, and the heartbreaking (yet hilarious) *Kimberly Akimbo*, which features Orlando's (and the arts center's) Miguel Gil in the leading male role.

The Notebook is an adaptation of Nicholas Sparks's romantic bestseller about love and memory, while *SIX,* another returning favorite and also a season option, is a concert-style revenge fantasy featuring the wronged wives of Henry VIII. Among them is another arts center alum, Sierra Fermin, in a leading role.

Season subscriptions, obviously, are no longer available. Individual tickets for each show typically go on sale several months in advance of opening night. To receive the most up-to-date information, sign up for the arts center's newsletter at drphillipscenter.org or follow its social media updates on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube. AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando shows are presented in Walt Disney Theater.

WATER FOR ELEPHANTS

November 4–9

The circus is coming to town—and in a way that even PETA wouldn't oppose. *Water for Elephants* brings with it a veritable menagerie of performing animals, including a suitably enormous pachyderm named Rosie. The hook? They're all puppets, made real (and adorable) through extraordinary stagecraft.

The show's imaginative simulation of life under the big top was one of its most notable attractions when it premiered on Broadway last March. Critics oohed and aahed over those cleverly crafted critters (puppets and projections) as well as the amazing acrobats, aerialists and other 100 percent flesh-and-blood performers who made the experience feel immediate and genuine.

Adapted from the historical romance novel by Sara Gruen and set mostly in the '30s, *Water for Elephants* tells the story of an orphaned veterinary student, Jacob Jankowski, who joins a rag-tag traveling circus only to fall in love with a horse rider, Marlena Rosenbluth, who happens to be married to the company's abusive owner, August Rosenbluth. The two fall in love as they're training a stubborn elephant, Rosie.

The musical, a memory play told from the perspective of an elderly Jacob, resonated with audiences. *Water for Elephants* ran for eight months and netted seven Tony nominations, including specific nods for the direction of Jessica Stone (*Kimberly Akimbo*) and the book by Rick Elice (*Jersey Boys* and *Peter and the Starcatcher*).

The eclectic score is the work of PigPen Theatre Company, seven Carnegie Mellon School of Drama graduates who met as freshmen in 2007 and later moved to New York City, where they formed a combination theater company and indie folk band.

Those who haven't read Gruen's book may be familiar with its 2011 film adaptation, which starred Robert Pattinson and



The circus is coming to town—and in a way that even PETA wouldn't oppose. *Water for Elephants* tells the story of an orphaned veterinary student, Jacob Jankowski, who joins a ragtag traveling circus only to fall in love with a horse rider, Marlena Rosenbluth, who happens to be married to the company's abusive owner. *Variety* calls the show "spellbinding entertainment," while *The New York Times* hails it as "a huge and heart-filled musical."

Reese Witherspoon. That version featured a real elephant named Tai whose performance was enhanced via computer-generated animation.

Think of this touring trunk show as the polar opposite: It's a senses-satisfying tribute to the wonders that can be performed in real time with just human hands and voices. *Variety* calls *Water for Elephants* "spellbinding entertainment," while *The New York Times* hails it as "a huge and heart-filled musical."

HADESTOWN

November 28–30
SEASON OPTION

"It's Greek to me" is certainly an ironic way for Americans to express bafflement, considering that our culture—from literature to sports to retail products—is steeped in the wine-dark mythology of the ancient Greeks, including the critically acclaimed Broadway musical *Hadestown*.

Singer/songwriter Anaïs Mitchell, the sole creator of *Hadestown*—music, lyrics and book—takes classic archetypes of Greek mythology and transplants them in a contemporary setting that resembles New Orleans in the '30s (above ground, at least).

Mitchell's score "combines folk, pop, and Dixieland with rhythmic work shanties and, for the lovers, ethereal arias," wrote *New York Times* critic Jesse Green of the musical, which in 2019 garnered an astonishing 14 Tony nominations and won eight of them, including Best Musical and Best Original Score. (The soundtrack recording won a Grammy in 2020 for Best Musical Theater Album.)

The cerebral Mitchell—a literature professor's daughter whose music has been compared to that of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Gillian Welch—has made the mythological milieu accessible, even if your familiarity with the Greek gods and goddesses extends no further than the pair of Nikes (Goddess of Victory) in your closet or the can of Ajax (the

PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY



***Hadestown*—music, lyrics and book—takes classic archetypes of Greek mythology and transplants them in a contemporary setting that resembles New Orleans in the '30s (above ground, at least). Eurydice, unlike the myth in which a poisonous serpent causes her doom, has been lured to Hadestown by the promise of work and food and must be rescued by Orpheus. "Sumptuous, hypnotic," gushes *The New York Times*.**

great warrior of Homer's *Iliad*) under the sink.

In classical mythology, Orpheus is a poet and musician while Eurydice is his beloved bride. When Eurydice is killed by a snakebite, Orpheus embarks on a hazardous journey to the Underworld to plead with King Hades for her return.

In *Hadestown*, directed by Rachel Chavkin (*Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*), the contours of the myth are the same. But Hadestown is a grim and oppressive factory town—accessible by train, not the river Styx—where a malevolent Hades forces the dead under his control to labor unceasingly at building an endless wall around his city.

Eurydice, unlike the myth in which a poisonous serpent causes her doom, has been lured to Hadestown by the promise of work and food. Naturally, she comes to regret her decision—and it's up to Orpheus to persuade Hades to relent. In that effort he's aided by Persephone, the overlord's long-suffering wife.

Mitchell traveled to hell and back (with stopovers in Vermont, Canada and London) during a 13-year odyssey to reshape and polish *Hadestown* and bring it to Broadway in 2019 for a triumphant debut.

"Sumptuous, hypnotic," gushes *The New York Times*. Raves *Entertainment Weekly*: "A trip to hell that's dark and tragic but spellbinding all the same … a welcome dance with the devil you'll be glad you took."

THE OUTSIDERS

December 16–23

The Outsiders—novelist S.E. Hinton's 1967 classic coming-of-age tale set in Tulsa, Oklahoma—arrived on Broadway in a production directed by Danya Taymor (niece of Julie Taymor of *The Lion King* fame) just last March and quickly demonstrated that gritty musicals about teenage street gangs need not be exclusive to *West Side Story*.

The upshot was 12 Tony nominations and four wins, including Best Musical and Best

PHOTO BY EVAN ZIMMERMAN FOR MURPHYMADE



***The Outsiders*—based on novelist S.E. Hinton's 1967 classic coming-of-age tale set in Tulsa—arrived on Broadway last March and quickly demonstrated that gritty musicals about teenage street gangs need not be exclusive to *West Side Story*. The proof was 12 Tony nominations and four wins, including Best Musical and Best Direction of a Musical. *Entertainment Weekly* writes: "*The Outsiders* has a heart of gold and the power to inspire an entire generation."**

PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY

Direction of a Musical for Taymor. The novel (and the musical) depicts a tense standoff between two gangs—the blue-collar "greasers" and the more privileged "socs" (short for "society types")—that eventually explodes into violence.

Indeed, the rumble scene, which lasts just three wordless minutes, has been lauded for its brutal impact. "People's jaws drop," said Taymor to *The New York Times*. "I've seen people cry during the rumble. I've seen people clutching their chests. It's a collective moment where the audience stops breathing."

Amazingly, the novel—which deals with themes of class conflict, the struggle to find one's place in the world and the importance of family and friendship—was mostly written when Hinton was just 15 years old. (She purposely used her initials rather than her real name, Susan Eloise Hinton, so that male reviewers wouldn't automatically dismiss the work.)

The Outsiders, though, was a hit with young readers and achieved multigenerational longevity when it was named one of the 100 most inspiring novels of all time by the BBC. Although the book has stirred controversy for decades, it's still part of the curriculum in many middle schools and high schools.

Hinton's work was also adapted into a 1983 film directed by Francis Ford Coppola that helped jump-start the careers of numerous future stars, including C. Thomas Howell, who played greaser (and narrator) Michael "Ponyboy" Curtis.

Rob Lowe played Ponyboy's older brother, Sodapop "Soda" Curtis; and Ralph Macchio played Ponyboy's best friend, Johnny Cade. Also in the film were Tom Cruise, Matt Dillon, Emilio Estevez, Leif Garrett, Diane Lane and Patrick Swayze.

There was a previous attempt to bring the story to the stage as a straight drama in 1990. But it's the musical that has really broken through, thanks in part to a haunting Americana-style score by Jonathan Clay and Zach



***& Juliet* flips the script of the greatest love story ever told and asks: What would happen if, instead of dying, Juliet learns that her melodramatic beloved was a cheating scoundrel and, following his demise, runs away to Paris to find love on her own terms? The show features the music of Max Martin, the most successful pop hitmaker of the 21st century. Says *The Guardian*: "These songs have soundtracked our lives and it feels like giving the inner child a big hug to hear them sung with such life-affirming joy."**

Chance of the group Jamestown Revival (working in tandem with Justin Levine, who also co-wrote the script with Adam Rapp).

Entertainment Weekly writes: "*The Outsiders* has a heart of gold and the power to inspire an entire generation." *New York Magazine* calls the show "more pulse-pounding than anything on Broadway" and "an exhilarating world of movement with high-octane choreography."

& JULIET

January 6–11, 2026

The most successful hitmaker of the 21st century isn't Taylor Swift or Beyoncé. It's Max Martin, the Swedish songwriter and producer who has churned out more than 25 chart-toppers for and with the likes of Katy Perry, the Backstreet Boys and, well, Taylor Swift.

Such Martin blockbusters as "Baby One More Time," "I Want It That Way," "I Kissed a Girl," "Larger Than Life," "That's The Way It Is" and "Can't Stop the Feeling!"—along with two dozen others that you'll recognize instantly if you've been near a radio or Spotify since Bill Clinton was president—form the backbone of *& Juliet* along with a new song, "One More Try."

But the show isn't simply a tribute to a European pop Svengali whom you probably couldn't pick out of a lineup. It's a high-concept romp that picks up where Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* left off. You might be wondering how that's possible, given that the Bard's immortal weeper leaves off with both of its main characters dead.

In this iteration (with a book by David West Read, a writer and executive producer on TV's *Schitt's Creek*), Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway, convinces her husband that the play needs to be rewritten in a way that keeps Juliet alive to have further experiences and to grow as a character.

The complications that ensue—often to Shakespeare's chagrin—form a brassy

PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY



***Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*—in an exclusive Florida run—will arrive boasting a record nine Olivier Awards in London and six Tony wins in 2018, including Best Play. The *Chicago Sun-Times* describes the show's visual effects as "a stunning display of just how far theater technology has come." It's not necessary to be familiar with the previous Harry Potter stories to understand and enjoy the stage spectacular—so muggles, too, will have a magical time.**

PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY

deconstruction of commonly accepted literary tropes about young love and tragedy.

& Juliet flips the script of the greatest love story ever told and asks: What would happen if, instead of dying, Juliet (whom Anne wisely insists should be age 20, *not* age 13) learns that her melodramatic beloved was a cheating scoundrel and, following his demise, runs away to Paris to find love on her own terms?

The show—directed by Luke Sheppard, a former child actor who earned accolades for his staging of the U.K. debut of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights*—premiered in England at the Manchester Opera House. It was nominated for nine Olivier Awards, winning three. The subsequent Broadway production was likewise nominated for nine Tonys and drew enthusiastic notices from reviewers.

Variety calls the show "an Elizabethan jukebox that draws on Tudor chic, contains a bevy of well-researched Shakespeare jokes and historical references, and uses beloved pop songs to spread a palatable feminist message."

Adds *The Guardian*: "Nostalgia is a driving force here, especially for millennials—these songs have soundtracked our lives and it feels like giving the inner child a big hug to hear them sung with such life-affirming joy."

HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD

January 24–February 15, 2026

Hey, Harry Potter: You've defeated Lord Voldemort and set records on Broadway and in the West End. What are you going to do now? He's going to Disney World, of course—or, at least, to Walt Disney Theater.

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child—in an exclusive Florida run—will arrive boasting a resumé that any show would envy, including the most tickets sold in a single week in New York and a record nine Olivier Awards in London. (Those six Tony wins in 2018, including



***Hell's Kitchen*, at its heart about a fraught but loving relationship between an overprotective mother and her adventurous daughter, plays out against dazzling choreography and a sizzling soundtrack culled from the songbook of Alicia Keys, upon whom the main character, Ali, is based. *The Guardian* enthuses: "Lyrics and rhythms have been refreshed for the purposes of the story... Keys's live-wire theatrical adaptation of her own hit list puts the rest of the [jukebox musical] genre to shame."**

Best Play, are nothing to sneeze at either.)

Legions of fans, obviously, are eager to see what creator J.K. Rowling has called "the eighth (and final) Harry Potter story." That's not surprising since the books in the series have sold more than 600 million copies and the attendant film versions have grossed more than $9.5 billion.

Cursed Child—a nonmusical collaboration between Rowling and playwright Jack Thorne with director John Tiffany—picks up 19 years after the events of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, in which Harry finally vanquishes "He Who Cannot Be Named."

It should be noted, however, that it is *not* necessary to be familiar with the characters or the previous stories to understand and enjoy the stage spectacular—so muggles, too, will have a magical time.

Here's the premise: Harry, now an adult, is married to Ginny Weasley. The Potters, alongside Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, who are also a married couple, are sending their children off to Hogwarts to begin their magical education. Harry's son, Albus, is anxious to go but afraid that he'll not measure up due to the large shadow cast by his father—who is now Head of Magical Law Enforcement at the Ministry of Magic.

However, Albus makes a surprising friend on the Hogwarts Express—Scorpius Malfoy, the child of Harry's former nemesis, Draco. Albus is, in fact, lagging in magical skill and is ostracized by his peers—with the exception of Scorpius. In an effort to prove himself and to right a wrong, Albus enlists Scorpius and Delphini (Delphi) Diggory in a perilous time-travel adventure that threatens to return the wizarding world to darkness.

The touring show is a condensed version of the two-part, five-hour marathon that originally ran in New York and London and was described by *Forbes* as "one of the most defining pop culture events of the decade." Still, the razzle-dazzle remains undiminished in this relatively compact

PHOTO BY MARC J. FRANKLIN



***Kimberly Akimbo* is the story of Kimberly Levaco, a 15-year-old girl born with a genetic aging disorder. Her body resembles that of a woman well past 70, but she wants to experience everything that her teenage peers crave while she still can. She meets a soulmate in Seth Weetis, an anagram-loving classmate played by Orlando's Miguel Gil, and learns to take control of her own life—no matter how long that life ultimately lasts. *Kimberly Akimbo* won five Tonys, including Best Musical.**

two-and-a-half-hour production.

The *Chicago Sun-Times* raves that "the illusions—which include, but are not limited to, wand battles, levitation, flying, telekinesis, shape-shifting and conjuring/throwing fire so intense you can feel the flames' heat in the audience—are a stunning display of just how far theater technology has come."

HELL'S KITCHEN

March 3–8, 2026

Ali is a 17-year-old New Yorker whose adolescence loosely resembles that of Grammy-winning superstar Alicia Keys. She lives with her mother, Jersey, in a small apartment on the 42nd floor of the subsidized housing complex Manhattan Plaza in the neighborhood known as Hell's Kitchen.

Jersey, a single mother, must work two jobs while watching over Ali, who decides to romantically pursue a handsome amateur percussionist named Knuck who practices in the courtyard of their building. When Knuck accuses Ali of only being attracted to him because it will horrify her mother, she retorts, "That's not what I think." Then she admits, "It's a little what I think."

Hell's Kitchen, which opened on Broadway last year, scored 13 Tony nominations, winning two. Part memoir and part jukebox musical, the production—directed by four-time Tony nominee Michael Greif—draws on Keys's real-life experiences and underlines them with a score of new songs and the artist's biggest hits alike.

Ali clashes with Jersey, whom she sees as overprotective and overbearing, and pursues Knuck regardless. Then, after meeting Miss Liza Jane, a musical mentor who teaches her to play the piano, the teenager finds a way to truly express herself. But the story is also sympathetic to Jersey, who wants to ensure that her daughter makes different choices from her own.

This fraught but loving relationship—and

PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS



The love story in *The Notebook*—based on the bestselling 1996 novel by Nicholas Sparks—is dramatized with interwoven, nonlinear flashbacks that involve the ill and aging Noah and Allie's teenage selves and then, nearly a decade later, their young-adult selves—sometimes with all three versions of the characters onstage at the same time. *USA Today* calls the achingly poignant production "life-affirming and ingeniously adapted."

the family's tenuous lives in New York in the mid-'90s—plays out against dazzling choreography and a sizzling soundtrack culled from Keys's multiplatinum songbook, which includes "Fallin'," "Girl on Fire," "The River," "Kaleidoscope," "Work On It" and "Empire State of Mind" (her Grammy-winning collaboration with Jay-Z).

Hell's Kitchen's Tony wins were for Maleah Joi Moon as Ali (Best Actress) and Kecia Lewis as Miss Liza Jane (Best Featured Actress). But the touring version features plenty of holdover elements that have been lauded in their own right—perhaps most notably a book by Pulitzer Prize finalist Kristoffer Diaz that earned its own nomination by providing an uncommonly sturdy dramatic framework for the music by Keys.

The Guardian enthuses: "Lyrics and rhythms have been refreshed for the purposes of the story, and not a single tune feels obligatorily wedged in. Alicia Keys's live-wire theatrical adaptation of her own hit list puts the rest of the [jukebox musical] genre to shame."

Variety describes *Hell's Kitchen* as "a sparkling story paying homage to New York, to that beautiful and heartbreaking transition between girlhood and womanhood and the women who hold our hands through it all."

KIMBERLY AKIMBO

April 14–19, 2026

Born with a genetic aging disorder similar to progeria, Kimberly Levaco is a 15-year-old girl whose body resembles that of a woman well past 70. Knowing that she won't live much beyond 16, she wants to experience everything that her teenage peers crave—including a crush and a romance—while she still can.

If that seems like a downer of a premise for a musical, you should know that the show—which opened on Broadway in 2022—won five Tonys, including Best Musical, and was described by *The New Yorker* as a "howlingly funny heartbreaker of a show."

PHOTO BY JERRY CERVANTES



***SIX* is a fast-paced musical framed as a pop concert—a 16th-century *Queen for a Day* vocal competition among the aggrieved former wives of Henry VIII. The musical gives each of the corpulent and egotistical ruler's half-dozen wives the opportunity to proclaim in song why she was the most tortured, neglected and long-suffering among his spousal sextet. In the touring production, one of Henry's singing spouses will be played by Sierra Fermin, an alum of AdventHealth School of the Arts.**

PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS

Kimberly Akimbo—directed by Jessica Stone (*Water for Elephants*)—features book and lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire (based on his 2001 play) and a score by Jeanine Tesori (*Fun Home*).

On top of having to cope with her rare affliction, Kimberly must deal with a well-meaning father who drinks too much; a pregnant mother who's a neglectful hypochondriac; and a grifter aunt with a dark secret who pulls Kimberly and her choir-kid classmates into a dubious check-fraud scheme.

But Kimberly finds a friend in a nerdy fellow sophomore, Seth Weetis, who plays the tuba and loves word games, especially anagrams, and has a unique way of looking at life—and at her.

Seth will be played by Orlando's own Miguel Gil, who was a senior at Windermere High School when he won Best Male Performer at Dr. Phillips Center's 2021 Applause Awards. The following year he played Amos Hart in the arts center's summer stock production of *Chicago* and was an intern and instructor at the musical-theater summer camps held through AdventHealth School of the Arts.

As an Applause Award winner, Gil was a competitor in the National High School Musical Theater Awards—often referred to as the Jimmy Awards—held in New York City. His exposure there led to his casting as an understudy for the role of Seth in the original Broadway production of *Kimberly Akimbo*.

One of the show's sweetest moments is a duet between Kimberly and Seth, "Anagram," in which Seth creates an anagram out of Kimberly's name while she admires his outside-the-box view of the world.

Ultimately, *Kimberly Akimbo* is about a quest for agency as the undaunted title character learns to take control of her own life—she leaves her family and takes a road trip with Seth—no matter how long that life ultimately lasts.

The message is to live every moment,

which is driven home in "Great Adventure," an upbeat ensemble number that notes "no one gets a second chance."

THE NOTEBOOK

May 12–17, 2026

Nicholas Sparks's 1996 debut novel, *The Notebook*, was a runaway bestseller and is today firmly ensconced among the most poignant literary love stories of this generation.

Likewise, a 2004 film adaptation that starred Rachel McAdams was a sleeper hit at the box office and, while not a critical favorite (some opined that it was overly sentimental), was nonetheless listed among the 30 Most Romantic Movies of All Time by *US Weekly*. Could a stage version have been far behind for such a proven crowd-pleaser?

Certainly not. *The Notebook: The Musical*, directed by Michael Greif (*Dear Evan Hansen, Next to Normal, Rent*) and Schele Williams (*The Wiz,* Disney's revival of *Aida*), opened on Broadway in 2024. On the merch table were show-branded boxes of tissue to dab the tears that audiences were certain to shed during the achingly poignant production.

Plenty of tissue boxes were sold—and used. The story is well known from the book and movie, but we'll still avoid spoilers. Suffice it to say the plot features Noah Calhoon, a charming boy from the wrong side of the tracks, who falls for artistic, privileged Allie Hamilton when both are teens.

Multiple factors keep them separated for years—parental disapproval, the Vietnam War, an inconvenient engagement—but eventually they find their way back to one another.

Now old and living in a care facility, Allie has dementia, and Noah, her devoted husband, reads aloud their multidecade love story from a tattered notebook in hopes that it will spark her fading memory. The narrative describes their relationship from first meeting to separation to reunion to marriage to illness and old age.

The journey is dramatized with interwoven, nonlinear flashbacks that involve their past teenage selves and then, nearly a decade later, their young-adult selves—sometimes with all three versions of the characters onstage at the same time.

With a book by Bekah Brunstetter (NBC's *This Is Us*) and music and lyrics by indie singer-songwriter Ingrid Michaelson, *The Notebook: The Musical* nearly always evokes at least wistful sniffles.

Entertainment Weekly notes that the "love story for the ages" is full of "butterfly-inducing highs, stunning performances and beautiful songs," while *USA Today* calls it "life-affirming and ingeniously adapted."

SIX

June 2–7, 2026
SEASON OPTION

The musical comedy *SIX* is the most fun anyone has had with King Henry VIII since Herman's Hermits immortalized the serial-marrying monarch in their 1965 hit "I'm Henry the VIII, I Am." You remember: He's the one who got married to the widow next door, who'd been married seven times before—and *every one* was a Henry.

Of course, the historical Henry VIII was really married only six times—but that fact wouldn't have worked out well lyrically. Anyway, the song came out about 60 years and a feminist revolution ago. But enough already about Henry! That's the message of *SIX,* a playful, puckish revenge fantasy.

The musical gives each of the corpulent and egotistical monarch's half-dozen wives the opportunity to proclaim in song why she was the most tortured, neglected and long-suffering among his spousal sextet. The soloists are backed by a rocking all-female band, Ladies in Waiting.

The competition is fierce, considering that the women were variously demoted (Catherine of Aragon) or beheaded (Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard). Jane Seymour died in childbirth and Anne of Cleves was dumped after just six months because his majesty considered her to be homely. One wife, Catherine Parr, was fortunate enough to outlive her husband.

The fast-paced musical is framed as a pop concert—a 16th-century *Queen for a Day* vocal competition among the aggrieved former wives club. The woeful winner is to be crowned the girl group's lead singer.

In making their case for most-abused, the women channel the vibes of contemporary divas—Adele, Beyoncé, Ariana Grande, Alicia Keys, Avril Lavigne, Nicki Minaj, Rihanna, Britney Spears—performing original songs by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss.

Marlow and Moss (who co-directs with Jamie Armitage)—were Cambridge University

students when they wrote the lyrics and book for *SIX*, which premiered in a 100-seat theater at the 2017 Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Among the attendees were theatrical impresarios who knew a hit when they saw one.

By the end of the year, *SIX* was already a sensation on London's West End, then toured the United Kingdom and generated five Olivier Award nominations, including one for Best Musical. Next stop: Broadway—but with an unexpected detour.

In March 2020, only hours before *SIX* was set to open in New York, the pandemic turned off the house lights. It wasn't until 18 months later that the much-anticipated musical premiered at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre to euphoric reviews.

In fact, *SIX* is so much fun that it's already attracting a cult following of fans who've seen it multiple times and know the dialogue and lyrics. And no one is under the illusion that they're getting a literal history lesson about the origins of the English Reformation.

One of Henry's singing spouses will be played by yet another Dr. Phillips Center alum, Sierra Fermin, who starred as Elle Woods in the arts center's 2019 high-school production of *Legally Blonde*. In 2022 she was an intern and instructor, along with *Kimberly Akimbo*'s Miguel Gil, at the musical-theater summer camps held through AdventHealth School of the Arts. ■

SUBSCRIPTION AND TICKET INFORMATION



EVENT: AdventHealth Broadway in Orlando 25/26 season

SHOWS/DATES: *Water for Elephants*, November 4–9; *Hadestown* (season option), November 28–30; *The Outsiders*, December 16–23; *& Juliet*, January 6–11, 2026; *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, January 24–February 15, 2026; *Hell's Kitchen,* March 3–8, 2026; *Kimberly Akimbo*, April 14–19, 2026; *The Notebook*, May 12–17, 2026; *SIX* (season option), June 2–7, 2026

TICKETS: Season subscriptions are no longer available. However, individual tickets for each show typically go on sale several months in advance of opening night and may be purchased at drphillipscenter.org or by calling the box office at 407.358.6603. For the most up-to-date information, sign up for the arts center's newsletter at drphillipscenter.org, or follow its social media updates on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. You may also visit the box office at 445 South Magnolia Avenue, Orlando, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays, or from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. For groups of 10 or more, email groups@drphillipscenter.org or call 407.455.5550 (online and group ticket purchases are subject to handling fees).

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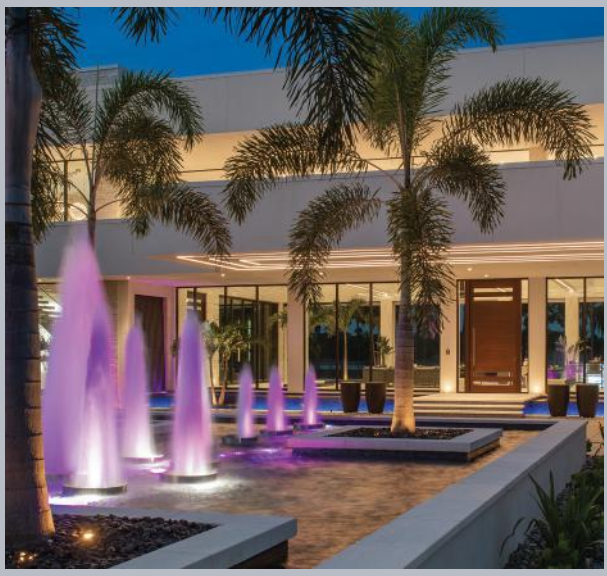
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