



Walton Arts Center

# OnStage

Spring 2025



MJ



Sonia De Los Santos



Funny Girl



Champions of Magic

## also inside:

- > Shows for Just \$10
- > Wedding Feature
- > Meet Our *Friends*
- > Hip-Hop 101

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Walton Arts Center



## From the President/CEO

### Welcome!

I am so excited that you are here to see a performance at Walton Arts Center. Whether you are on a date or out with your family or a group of friends, I want you to know that our entire team has worked to make sure this night is special for you.

We believe that everyone should have access to the arts, and we take our role of bringing live performances to Northwest Arkansas very seriously. It doesn't matter if you are an adult attending a Broadway show or a child attending their first live theater performance, a performing arts experience can change your life.

Cost can be a barrier for so many. Walton Arts Center's 10x10 Arts Series provides access for community members to attend a show for just \$10. That low ticket price also encourages people to try something new with minimal risk. The series is full of great performances that introduce a variety of art forms and performers.

Spring is always an exciting time here at Walton Arts Center – it's when we take performers out into the community for our annual Artosphere Arts + Nature Festival. For two weeks in May, we will present art in nature and art inspired by nature. Many performances are free or low cost, giving everyone the opportunity to attend.

It is your support that allows us to continue nurturing creativity and bringing world-class performances to our stages and our community. We are also proud to provide educational programs, workshops and community outreach efforts, and your commitment helps us expand those initiatives to inspire the next generation of artists and audiences alike.

As you settle in for today's show, we invite you to immerse yourself in the magic of live performance. Let this moment be an escape from the everyday, an opportunity to reflect, feel and celebrate the beauty of human expression.

Enjoy the show!

Peter B. Lane  
Walton Arts Center President/CEO

**Cover clockwise:**  
Jamaal Fields-Green  
as MJ and the cast of  
the MJ first national  
tour – Photo by  
Matthew Murphy for  
MurphyMade. Hannah  
Shankman in the  
first national tour of  
FUNNY GIRL – Photo  
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Peter B. Lane  
President/CEO

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Kattam and  
his Tam-Tams



The Simon &  
Garfunkel Story



Peking Acrobats



Rodney Crowell



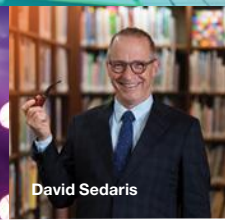
Matt Wilson's Good Trouble Quintet



Terrapin Puppet Theatre



Champions  
of Magic



David Sedaris

# Our **2025** Season Continues!

## JANUARY

***Ain't Too Proud - The  
Life and Times of The  
Temptations***  
Jan. 22-23

**Suzu Bogguss**  
Jan. 24

**Syncopated Ladies**  
Jan. 26

**BeauSoleil avec  
Michael Doucet**  
Jan. 30

**Helen Hong**  
Jan. 30

**René Marie &  
Experiment In Truth**  
Jan. 31

## FEBRUARY

**Kattam and  
his Tam-Tams**  
Feb. 2

**Tacarra Williams**  
Feb. 8

**Sonia De Los  
Santos: Música**  
Feb. 11

**Billy Stritch & Gabrielle  
Stravelli Mel & Ella Swing!**  
Feb. 15

**The Simon &  
Garfunkel Story**  
Feb. 18

**THE BOOK  
OF MORMON**  
Feb. 20-23

## MARCH

**Peking Acrobats**  
March 4

**The Burney Sisters**  
March 7

**Matt Wilson's Good  
Trouble Quintet**  
March 8

**New York Gilbert &  
Sullivan Players:  
The Mikado**  
March 9

**Keb' Mo' x Shawn Colvin**  
March 15

**Funny Girl**  
March 18-23

## APRIL

**The Second City:  
65th Anniversary Show**  
April 1

**The Edge Effect**  
April 4

**VoiceJam Competition**  
April 5

**Back to the Future:  
The Musical**  
April 8-13

**Champions of Magic**  
April 23



Nimbus  
Dance

**Terrapin Puppet Theatre:  
The Paper Escaper**  
April 24

**An Evening with  
David Sedaris**  
April 24

## MAY

**Nimbus Dance**  
May 9

**Dover Quartet with  
Edgar Meyer**  
May 17

**MJ**  
May 20-25

**Rodney Crowell**  
May 30



SCAN FOR  
OUR CURRENT  
CALENDAR LISTING

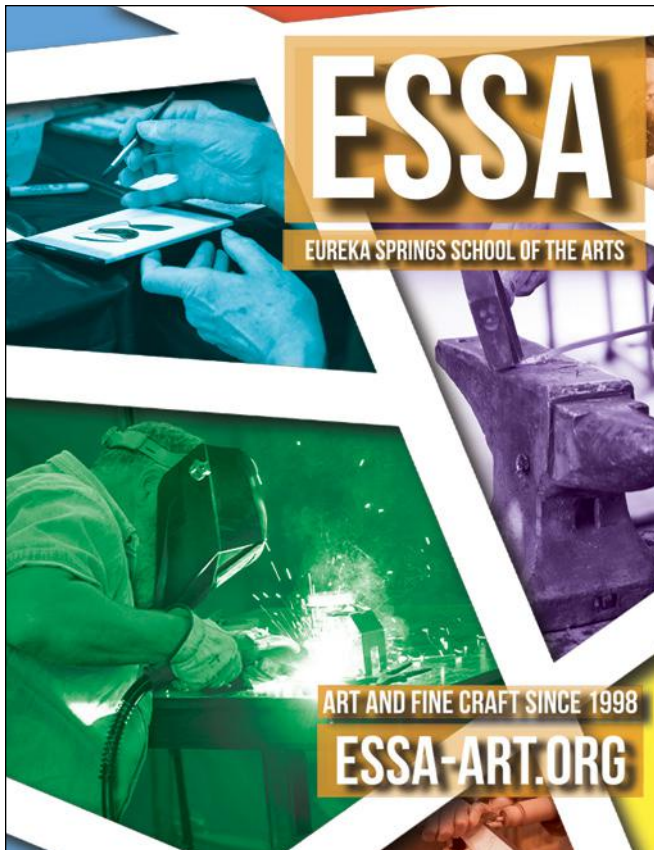


Keb' Mo'



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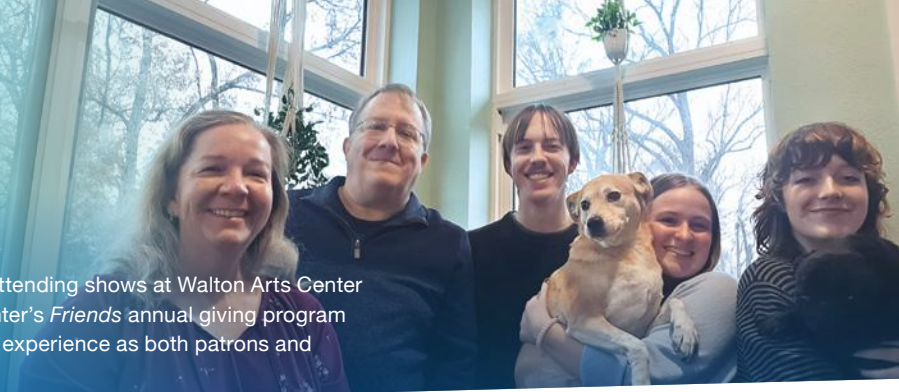
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## Friends Spotlight

### Robert & Melissa Brown Family

Robert and Melissa Brown and their family have been attending shows at Walton Arts Center since 2001 and have been members of Walton Arts Center's *Friends* annual giving program for 10 years. We asked them to share a little about their experience as both patrons and supporters of the arts.



#### Do you have any special memories related to your participation in the *Friends* program?

There are so many great memories ... We were lucky enough to have the opportunity to get tickets to a couple of [education] shows as a *Friend*. School kids (lots of them) were bussed in on a field trip to see the shows. It was so cool getting to see these young people laughing and cheering, possibly getting exposed to this kind of live entertainment for the first time.

#### How have the arts impacted your life or the lives of those around you?

It's immeasurable, I think. No movie, TV show, record, tape or digital recording can ever capture the intimacy and emotion of live performance, be it a musical performance, dance or theater. The performing arts really allow us to experience emotions that would otherwise go unrealized. It's important for all of us to remain in touch with that.

#### What do you want other people to know about the *Friends* program?

The benefits (lounge, parking, ticket exchange, first crack at tickets) are nice, but supporting Walton Arts Center in bringing amazing acts to Northwest Arkansas and creating opportunities for school children to see shows makes it an easy decision to be a part of the *Friends* program.

#### As a *Friend* your donation helps support our community-based programs such as the Take A Seat free ticket program, free school field trips and educator professional development – why is sharing the arts with our community important to you?

The arts are something that everyone should be introduced to. The school field trips are likely the first (and possibly only) exposure that some students will have to the performing arts. There are future artists and performers in those crowds of kids. Unfortunately, not everybody has the means to attend live music or theater events. The free ticket programs help make the arts available to everybody and that is a worthy cause.



## Help Us Create a Legacy of Inspiration

Your love for the arts can inspire generations to come. By making a legacy gift to Walton Arts Center, you help ensure the power of live performance uplifts our community far into the future. It's a simple and meaningful way to make an impact, often with little or no cost to you today.

Including Walton Arts Center as a beneficiary in your will, trust, life insurance policy or retirement account is easy – and it helps guarantee that arts experiences remain accessible and enriching for everyone.

### Set the stage for your legacy.

To learn more, contact Becky Brink, vice president of development, at 479.316.7504.

**"Nancy and I want to give back to an organization that has meant so much to us over the years. By including Walton Arts Center in our will, we are making a legacy gift that will impact the next generation and keep the arts accessible for everyone in our community."**

– Dick Trammel







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BeauSoleil avec Michael Doucet



New York Gilbert & Sullivan  
Players: *The Mikado*



Nimbus Dance

## BeauSoleil avec Michael Doucet

Thursday, Jan. 30, 7pm

For 50 years this group has been making some of the most popular Cajun music on the planet. Their distinctive sound derives from New Orleans jazz, blues rock, folk, swamp pop, Zydeco, country and bluegrass.



## Sonia De Los Santos: Música

Tuesday,  
Feb. 11, 7pm

It's hard not to smile when Santos shares some of her favorite things through song. Her new family-friendly show applauds women who make music and those who inspired her.

Sonia De Los Santos

## New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players: *The Mikado*

Sunday, March 9, 4pm

A new production of the classic comedic opera, *The Mikado* features Gilbert's lyrics and Sullivan's melodies, which are a delight for audiences of all ages.

**Show Underwriters:**  
*Tom & Jill King | Peter B. Lane & Barbara Putman*

## The Edge Effect

Friday, April 4, 7:30pm

As the headlining concert for this season's VoiceJam A Cappella Festival, this group takes harmonizing to the next level, proving that singers don't need technology to put on a great show.



The Edge Effect

## Nimbus Dance

Friday, May 9, 8pm

This world-class company is well-known for pivoting from ballet to Broadway to Beyoncé in just a few beats.

**Show Underwriter:**  
*Wendy Brant*

## Dover Quartet with Edgar Meyer

Saturday, May 17  
8pm

Dover Quartet was named one of the greatest string quartets of the century by the BBC. You don't want to miss this performance with Grammy®-nominated bassist Edgar Meyer.

**Show Underwriters:**  
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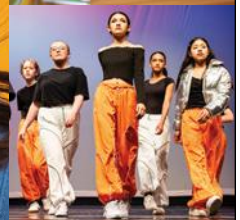
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# Love Finds a Way, No Matter the Weather!

By Caitlin Wardlaw & Mathew Post

Up until three weeks before the wedding, our venue was set in Rogers, and we were eagerly counting down the days. Then, my nightmare, the tornadoes swept through and our original venue was no longer able to host us. For about 24 hours, we felt the weight of stress and uncertainty, but then Shannon Eubanks at Walton Arts Center and our incredible wedding planner, Stephanie Benton, swooped in and truly saved the day. Within just three days

of the tornadoes, they helped us reimagine our plans and craft a new vision to transform Walton Arts Center into the wedding of our dreams – filled with laughter, love and those unforgettable moments we'll cherish forever. We are immensely grateful for the talent and dedication of the wonderful people who rallied to make our day so special, turning a potential setback into a celebration we will always remember.

Contact our events team at [weddings@waltonartscenter.org](mailto:weddings@waltonartscenter.org) to book the perfect venue for your special day.



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# Choreographers Ellenore Scott & Ayodele Casel Give *Funny Girl* Flair, Fun and Finesse

Originally published at [broadwayworld.com](http://broadwayworld.com),  
reprinted with permission

By Valerie-Jean Miller

Featuring one of the greatest scores of all time, including classic songs “Don’t Rain On My Parade,” “I’m the Greatest Star,” and “People,” this love letter to the theater is the story of the indomitable Fanny Brice, a girl from the Lower East Side who dreamed of a life on the stage. Everyone told her she’d never be a star, but then something funny happened — she became one of the most beloved performers in history, shining brighter than the brightest lights of Broadway.

Before *Funny Girl* comes to Walton Arts Center for eight performances March 18-23, get to know the choreographer and tap choreographer who created the outstanding dance sequences in the show, Ellenore Scott and Ayodele Casel.

## **How did the choreography differ from the original production since portions of the show have been updated?**

**ES:** There are many different styles in *Funny Girl* and I wanted to make sure to highlight the very classic and long lines of the Ziegfeld Follies to the vaudeville acts of burlesque houses, the smooth moves of Jack Cole dancers in “Temporary Arrangement” and then right down to the slightly inebriated social dancing on “Henry Street” in Brooklyn. Research was important to me – but without being fully influenced by the original production. It is a revival, but I wanted to make sure I put my own spin on it (pun intended).

**AC:** I had a great opportunity to provide a historical context and rhythmic voice to Eddie Ryan and the production numbers the character “choreographs” in *Funny Girl*. I immediately thought about John Bubbles and The Nicholas Brothers, tap dance artists

who were part of the Ziegfeld legacy ... I was inspired by the many tap dance duo acts in the 1940s and 1950s like The Condos Brothers or Gene Kelly and Donald O’Connor.



## **How do each of you feel your choreography has enhanced this production?**

**ES:** The beautiful thing about this production of *Funny Girl* is that everything is a flashback to Fanny Brice, our main character. The audience is going on a journey to see “how did we get here?” I hope my choreography lets you feel like you are getting transported back in time and feel as though you are sitting in the audience of the Ziegfeld Follies show or drinking a pint on Henry Street.

**AC:** My intention was to provide a jolt of joy to the show and an appreciation and awe for the art of tap dance through the characters. I feel like the audience is invited to enjoy the journey early in the show when we see character Eddy Ryan’s showmanship, virtuosity and welcoming calls.

**All the production numbers contained many styles of dance, including acrobatics and aerial work. Obviously, the dancers had to be extremely versatile as well as excellent tappers ... what were the auditions like?**



Photos by Matthew Murphy for MurphyMade.

**ES:** Auditions for this show are probably one of the more difficult ones! My audition combo has an array of different dance styles so I can assess where people's strengths are! I also loved to hire dancers who really perform in auditions as if they are already onstage doing the show. I love dancers who commit to what they are doing.

**8 SHOWS /**  
**March**  
**18-23**

**AC:** These auditions require the full triple threat package. They must be able to do all styles really well and that can be challenging. As far as tap dancing is concerned, I make decisions based on who has good technique and understands rhythm and phrasing. Vocabulary alone isn't enough, dancers have to understand how to keep time, have clarity in their sound and of course, confidence in their performance.

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# Take A Seat Provides Access to the Arts

By Mallory Barker,  
senior coordinator of community outreach

Walton Arts Center's mission is to connect and engage with our community through our programming. When you financially support the organization, you also support community initiatives including Take A Seat that allows underserved or overlooked groups to see shows for free.

Take A Seat partners with area nonprofits serving students, seniors, children and families so that they can give those they serve the opportunity to attend a Walton Arts Center performance at no cost.

Your support has provided more than 18,600 free tickets to 138 non-profit organizations to see 260 performances since the program started in 2006. These tickets are distributed to individuals and to communities who could not afford them or who might otherwise feel excluded.

We do this because we believe in the transformative power of the arts to not only entertain but also to inspire, connect, educate, bridge differences, increase understanding and build better communities.

Take A Seat partners include Big Brothers Big Sisters, Single Parent Scholarship Fund, Canopy NWA, New Beginnings NWA, Veteran Affairs, Teen Action Support Center and other social services agencies serving families and individuals.

If your organization is interested in participating, more information and applications can be found at [waltonartscenter.org/edu/community](http://waltonartscenter.org/edu/community). If you are interested in making a gift to support the Take A Seat program, please contact [friends@waltonartscenter.org](mailto:friends@waltonartscenter.org). Your generosity helps us reach more people through these and other programs!



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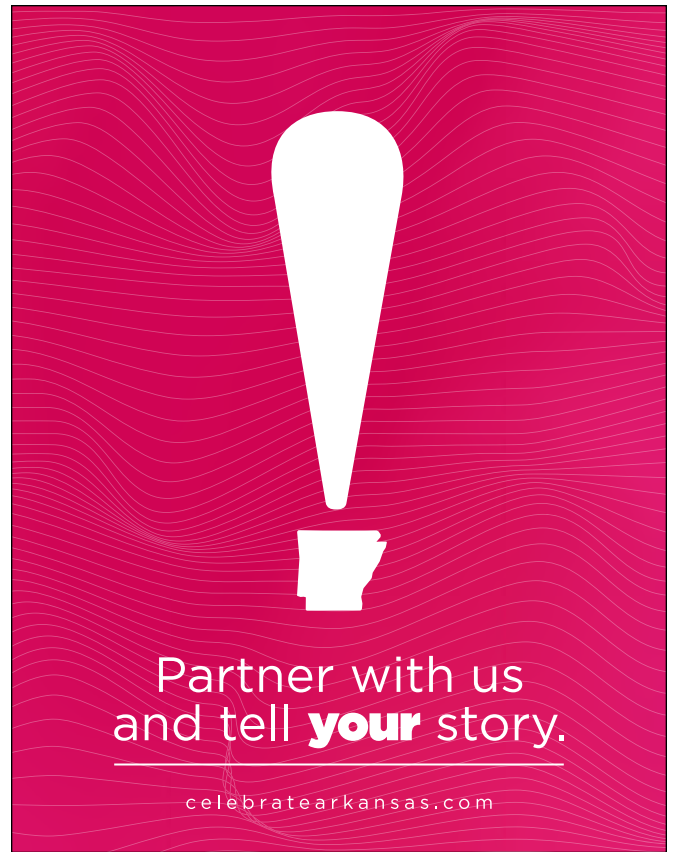
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## Staff Spotlight

# Kaylin Mason

## Director of Institutional Giving



Kaylin  
Mason

### Can you describe your primary role and typical day at Walton Arts Center?

As director of institutional giving, I'm responsible for securing grant funding to advance Walton Arts Center's mission, especially our arts education and access programs. My role is a mix of strategy and storytelling – I write proposals, report on our impact and connect with funders who are passionate about the arts. I also oversee development services, ensuring our fundraising operations run smoothly. Every day brings something new, and I love knowing my work helps more people in our community experience the arts.

### How did you get into this industry?

I stumbled into grant writing by following my strongest skill – writing – and found it was the perfect way to contribute meaningfully to work I care about. In 2019 I joined Walton Arts Center and officially stepped into the performing arts. But Walton Arts Center has been part of my life since childhood. Growing up in Fayetteville, I was captivated by the live performances I saw here – moments that sparked my own love for the arts.

### What is the most interesting thing about your job?

The people I work with are, without a doubt, the most interesting part of my job. It's inspiring to see how a wide range of talents, expertise, personalities and strengths come together to make everything we do possible. From those working directly with artists and patrons to the behind-the-scenes teams handling operations and support, each person brings something essential.

### What would you like patrons to know about Walton Arts Center?

I'd like patrons to know they can make an impact, just like our biggest grantors, by joining our *Friends* annual giving program, which harnesses the collective generosity of individual donors to support our most important, mission-driven work. *Friends* provide vital support to programs that spark curiosity in students, bring families together and inspire audiences of all ages – and they get some pretty exciting perks to enjoy at every show. Check it out!

## Our Art, Our Region, Our Time Showcases Regional Visual Artists

The visual arts have been an important part of our presenting history for several decades, but in the last few years, we've reimagined our visual arts program to focus more on work by artists who have a deep connection to Arkansas or our region. The annual *Our Art, Our Region, Our Time* exhibition, an open submission, juried show features new work by regional artists in all mediums, curated by local artist and guest curator Kathy P. Thompson.

In fall 2024, the visual arts team presented the fourth *Our Art, Our Region, Our Time* exhibition, featuring 106 pieces by 87 artists representing 20 cities and diverse communities that make up our region. "This exhibition shows how lucky we are in this area to have such a diversity of work from all kinds of people of all ages," said Thompson.

Before submissions open later this summer for our 2025 exhibition, we are highlighting a few of the artists whose works were exhibited in 2024.

"For decades I have been painting scenes from around Arkansas," said Daniel Coston, who presented *Rings of Time*, a brown ink drawing on an illustration board. "Within these works, I continue to explore my home state ... and I invite viewers

to pause and appreciate the minute details of the natural world, encouraging a deeper connection. We live in a beautiful place and it's worth looking as closely as possible."

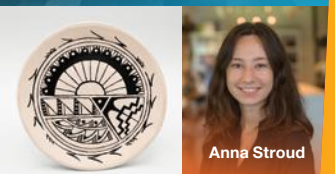
Northwest Arkansas native, Anna Stroud, has family ties to the Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico, inspiring her pottery.

"I was first introduced to this art form by my great-grandmother and her sister, whose painted pottery filled the shelves of our home," she said. "After my great-grandmother's passing in 2016, and the more recent passing of my grandmother in 2023, I began searching for ways to reconnect with them ... Reconnecting with traditions that my grandmothers valued serves to honor and rekindle their memory." Stroud holds a Bachelor of Art with an emphasis in drawing and painting from the University of Arkansas and preserves tradition within her studio practice.

For interested artists, stay tuned to our website and social media for 2025 *Our Art, Our Region, Our Time* submission dates and details.

**"This exhibition shows how lucky we are in this area to have such a diversity of work from all kinds of people of all ages."**

- Kathy P. Thompson



Anna Stroud



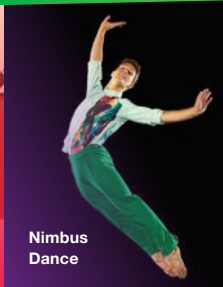
Daniel Coston



# Annual Artosphere Arts + Nature Festival Returns



Trout Fishing  
in America



Nimbus  
Dance



Trail Mix



Polyglot Theatre's Bees



Edgar Meyer

Every May, arts and nature collide in locations across Northwest Arkansas with the Artosphere Arts + Nature Festival. Full of free community events, low-cost performances and activities for families, the annual festival has something for everyone to enjoy!

Stay tuned to our social media for more Artosphere Festival events and announcements!

## Trout Fishing in America

Tuesday, May 6, 6:30pm  
Botanical Garden  
of the Ozarks

FREE

A returning Artosphere favorite, Grammy®-nominated musical group Trout Fishing in America, featuring Ozark natives Keith Grimwood and Ezra Idlet, will perform music that has captured the hearts and imaginations of audiences of all ages for more than four decades.

## Trail Mix

Friday, May 9, 5-7pm  
The Lower Ramble

FREE

Artosphere's signature event features live art, music and activities for kids and families! Explore the convergence of art and nature in the forest canopy and pathways through Tanglewood Creek and Fay Jones Woods.

## Nimbus Dance

Friday, May 9, 8pm  
Walton Arts Center / Baum Walker Hall  
Tickets: \$10

Nimbus Dance bridges the gap between world-class performances and community engagement by presenting work that challenges while also speaking to and elevating the core beliefs of its diverse audience. You don't want to miss this highly physical and visually engaging performance.

Show Underwriter:  
Wendy Brant

## Polyglot Theatre's Bees

Week of May 12  
Various locations throughout NWA

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Show Underwriters:  
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# Creating *Back to the Future: The Musical*

Originally published in *Creating Back to the Future: The Musical* and reprinted with permission

By Robert Zemeckis, Oscar and Golden Globe-winning director and co-creator of the movie *Back to the Future*

In 2005, after my wife Leslie suggested we explore a theatrical musical based on *Back to the Future*, there was one thing Bob Gale and I knew for sure: If such a musical never happened, the world would be just fine. By 2005, the movies had risen in stature, and we didn't want to compromise that stature. More importantly, as theater neophytes, a musical was not just a total unknown to us, it was a serious risk. We risked alienating our fans and squandering the goodwill the world had for our franchise. We could not only fail, we could fail spectacularly.

No one would ever criticize us for not making *Back to the Future: The Musical*. Clearly, aborting the idea was the one safe choice, with absolutely no downside.

And yet ... seeing a great musical is an experience like no other. There's an energy in live theater that you can't get with cinema. And there was the lure of trying something outside our comfort zone. Could we actually pull it off? Would we kick ourselves years

later for not even trying it? How could we not at least explore it? We went back and forth on the subject. And that's where our secret weapon came in, "the red button."

Because *Back to the Future* was an original screenplay, we owned the theatrical rights. Not Universal, not Amblin. No, this was Zemeckis & Gale, all the way. And that put us in the driver's seat. So, we came to a simple decision. If at any point we thought the musical wouldn't be worthy of being called *Back to the Future*, we would push the red button, kill the entire project, and never look back. That was our protection against "spectacular failure."

More than once on the roller coaster of the development process, we considered pushing it. The time I recall most clearly was when we had trouble finding a director.

I actually flirted with the idea of directing the show myself. Then, good sense prevailed when I realized that if I got into serious hot water, I'd have to fire myself and that would redefine "spectacular failure." At that point, the red button seemed very enticing.

---

**"Seeing a great musical is an experience like no other."**

---

But, as you all know, we never pushed it. I credit the creative team for helping to keep our fingers safely away. Bob and I would get depressed and fatalistic, and then Alan Silvestri and Glen Ballard would bring us a wonderful new song that reminded us of what the show could be. Our 2017 showcase, when I first got to hear many of our songs performed properly, was a revelation. After that, we had the enthusiasm of producer Colin Ingram and the passion of director John Rando whose collective experience put any setbacks in proper perspective. They brought in an incredibly talented cast and crew



*Back to the Future*  
co-writer Bob Gale.





Left clockwise: Don Stephenson (Doc Brown) and Caden Brauch (Marty McFly). Zan Berube (Lorraine Baines), Burke Swanson (George McFly), Caden Brauch (Marty McFly) and the Company of BACK TO THE FUTURE: THE MUSICAL. Photos by Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman, 2024

and, with Bob Gale always there to keep the train on the tracks, that red button was soon left far behind. Thanks, everyone, there could be no better creative team!

Writing this, I now think the world actually might be a little better because *Back to the Future: The Musical* exists. It certainly is for me, and I think it's true for the vast majority of those who've seen it. I literally had tears in my eyes on opening night in Manchester; that's how happy I was (and still am) with the show. And now, when I encounter that rare person who has never seen the movie who asks me, "Which version should I see, the movie or the musical?" I answer, "The musical!" And then I add, "But the movie's pretty good too!"

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# Five Stars for our Fantastic Volunteer Crew

**The reviews are in, and our volunteers are the best in Northwest Arkansas!**

Volunteers help with nearly every aspect of the work we do at Walton Arts Center, from taking your tickets and helping you find your seat to stuffing programs into this magazine to helping with administrative tasks and so much more. They provide thousands of hours of service every year and we couldn't operate without them! In the words of our Director of Facilities Tom Debari, volunteers are "the glue of this performing arts center!"

But you don't have to take our word for it – here are some stories shared by patrons about our volunteers going above and beyond!



"My three-year-old son has autism and we went into the theater a few times, but it seemed to upset him so he and I spent most our time outside of the theater," says Mary Wilson, who attended *Bluey's Big Play* with her family. "The volunteers and staff were so kind to us the entire time. Someone showed us to the sensory

area, someone brought him pencils and paper to draw on ... they even let him touch the big balloon balls used for the end of the show before they brought them into the theater! He may not have sat through the whole show, but he had a great time thanks to the wonderful ushers and staff. I wanted to reach out

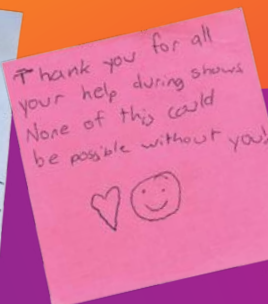
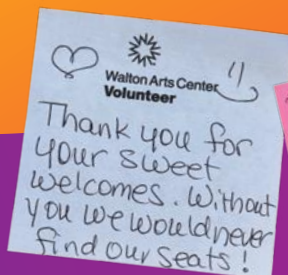
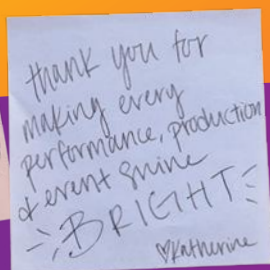
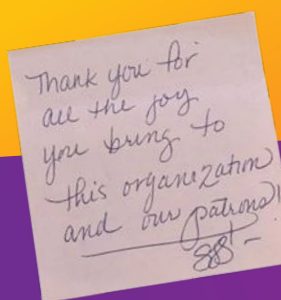
with sincere thanks for everyone who worked in the lobby that day – everyone was so kind and so understanding of my son's needs."

"This volunteer at Walton Arts Center, Peggy, did the sweetest thing for me, a total stranger, last night," says patron Bobbi Austin. "I had to step out during the first act of *Mean Girls The Musical* to do some over-the-phone-parenting (of which she had to hear every stern word). She reassured me that she was a mom and remembers those days and calmed me down enough to go back in and enjoy the musical. While we talked, she was crocheting something and explained that it was a dishtowel that she gives out to friends and family every year for Christmas. After the musical was over, she found me in the crowd and gave me the dishtowel she had been working on during our conversation. It might be the best gift I receive this year – how kind and thoughtful!"

---

**If you are interested in joining this stellar volunteer team and creating great experiences for patrons, students, teachers, donors and staff, please visit [waltonartscenter.org/volunteer](http://waltonartscenter.org/volunteer).**

---



Walton Arts Center would like to **share our appreciation** for the many **generous volunteers** whose time and dedication make our programming possible.

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# Arts Education Award Named for Staff Member and First Recipient: Dr. Patricia C. Relph



At Walton Arts Center, we are incredibly fortunate to have a team of talented, passionate individuals who are deeply committed to making the arts accessible to everyone. When we started plans to create an arts education award, our staff decided that the first award should honor one of our own – Dr. Patricia (“Dr. Pat”) Relph, a dedicated arts education advocate and a true powerhouse in arts learning across Arkansas.



In 2005, Relph became the first arts learning specialist at Walton Arts Center and has served Northwest Arkansas students in this role for two decades. Career achievements during that time include being a teaching artist in six SmART residency schools in our state, sitting as an artist in education on the roster of the Arkansas Arts Council and training Arkansas educators in arts integration in annual professional development programs. She is an arts advocate at the state and national level and a founding member of the Partners in Education Program at the John F.

Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Relph received the Arkansas Arts Council’s 2005 Governor’s Arts Award and has trained thousands of teachers, ultimately impacting hundreds of thousands students in our area.

Relph’s love of the arts came from her training in the arts, including a bachelor’s in theater from the University of Kansas and a master’s and Ph.D.

in speech and drama from Bowling Green State University. She is a reader at the Folger Shakespeare Library, The Shakespeare Centre Library at Stratford-upon-Avon, England and the National Library of the United Kingdom. She’s been a director, choreographer and performing artist.

In September 2024, we debuted The Dr. Patricia C. Relph Arts Education Award to recognize outstanding local arts educators. The inaugural award was presented to Relph at AMP Up the Arts, a new fundraising event for Walton Arts Center. The evening also included a dinner, Q&A and concert with hip-hop artist Nelly, all while bringing the important work of arts educators and advocates center stage. This award will honor the legacy and vision of its namesake and will be presented annually at this fundraiser to celebrate schools, educators, volunteers and arts leaders who exemplify Relph’s dedication to enriching education through the arts.

**Dr. Patricia (“Dr. Pat”) Relph is a dedicated arts education advocate and a true powerhouse in arts learning across Arkansas.**



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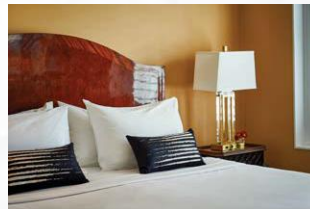
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# Psst: Don't Forget the “Unspoken” Rules of Theatergoing!

Everyone is welcome in Walton Arts Center's Baum Walker Hall and Starr Theater!

Whether this is your first visit or your 50th, below are some simple etiquette tips to help make this performance more enjoyable for you, your fellow audience members and the performers on stage.



**Arrive on time!** Showing up late for the show disturbs those around you, and for many shows, you might get caught in a seating hold, when entry to the theater is prohibited, and miss part of the show.



**Please silence and put away your cell phones** so they do not distract others. Even if you're just checking a text or game score, the light from your phone can be distracting to both your neighbors and the performers on stage. Photography and videography are strictly prohibited during the show.



**Unwrap candies and cough drops before the show begins.** We all know that trying to do so quietly during a performance never works.



**Don't know when to clap?** After a song or scene is always appreciated. When in doubt, follow your fellow audience members. Don't know when to laugh? When something is funny!



**Don't talk during the show.**

You paid good money for this show, don't ruin it for others by talking during the performance. Shushing and commenting to others is just as distracting as the original offense. If you're attending with a young child, arrive early and explain the story to your little one before the show starts.



**Attending a musical and want to sing along to one of your favorite songs?** Repress the urge! The actors onstage don't give away their talents for free, so why should you?



**In an effort to be more sustainable, digital programs are available for every show** – you can view these programs on your phone before and after the show and at intermission.



**ENJOY THE SHOW!**

The live performing arts are a shared experience. Keeping these tips in mind as well as practicing common courtesy can help ensure everyone has a fantastic experience at Walton Arts Center.



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# 2025 Upcoming Events

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**APRIL 27** RÜFÜS DU SOL with Sofia Kourtesis

**MAY 2** SESSANTA V 2.0: Primus, Puscifer, A Perfect Circle

**MAY 3** Staind & Breaking Benjamin with Wage War and Lakeview

**MAY 16** Alison Krauss & Union Station featuring Jerry Douglas with Willie Watson

**MAY 17** Nate Bargatze

**JUNE 5** Thomas Rhett with Tucker Wetmore & The Castellows

**JUNE 14** Bailey Zimmerman with Dylan Marlowe & Drew Baldridge

**JULY 19** Goo Goo Dolls with Dashboard Confessional

**AUGUST 3** "Weird Al" Yankovic with Puddles Pity Party

**SEPTEMBER 30** Papa Roach x Rise Against with Underoath



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# Fully-Covered Transportation Fuels Arts Experiences

WALTON ARTS CENTER

Photos by Jason Vinson Photography

Each year, thousands of students visit Walton Arts Center to see a show for free through the Classroom Series. For many schools, participation is made possible largely through a bus subsidy which helps offset the cost of transportation for classes coming to the theater.

In our 2023-24 season, Jasper High School traveled the furthest, covering 75 miles to reach our venue. Washington Elementary had the shortest distance at just .6 mile, and schools travelled from every distance in-between. Overall, the mileage travelled by all schools totaled 1,610 miles, and they took approximately 585 buses to get here.

While the cost of transportation by bus varies by school and distance, this cost can be a barrier to attendance. For example, a district may charge \$0.50 per mile for the bus and \$20 per hour for the bus driver, who preps the bus, drives to and from the theater and waits during the hour-long show.

"Schools face a lot of barriers when it comes to field trips such as justifying time out of the classroom, finding substitute teachers for any students who need to stay at the school and transportation," says Sallie Zazal, director of learning and engagement. "Transportation challenges include the cost of gas,

bus maintenance, paying the drivers, not to mention a bus driver shortage. Our goal is to serve every student in Northwest Arkansas, and making a field trip to our theaters accessible is part of that mission."

Along with generous financial support from J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc. and Mrs. Hunt, we are now able to cover 100% of bus costs for schools.

---

**"Our goal is to serve every student in Northwest Arkansas, and making a field trip to our theaters accessible is part of that mission."**

---

"By giving children high-quality arts experiences, we're hopeful they will not only grow up to have an appreciation for the arts but also feel comfortable in our space and recognize that Walton Arts Center is for everyone," says Zazal.







# Walton Arts Center Takes Hip-Hop 101 to Local Students

This school year, Walton Arts Center kicked off a new after-school program that gives students at four local institutions the opportunity to learn the elements of hip-hop, including music, lyrics, dance and stage presence, on-site and at no cost to them.

“Hip-hop is the most popular genre of American music and dance, but there are often costs and barriers to receiving quality instruction,” said Sallie Zazal, director of learning and engagement for Walton Arts Center. “We want to remove those barriers with this program. Hip-hop also holds a special place in the history of dance in America, and learning about its roots also teaches students American history. It’s a great example of arts integration.”

The teaching artists represent the best of the NWA hip-hop scene, including hip-hop choreographers and teachers CeCe Marie and Joshua Vang, songwriter, rapper and music producer Jeremiah Pickett (aka B.A.A.N.G.), audio engineer and fashion designer Jasper Logan and DJ Antonio Williams.

Walton Arts Center worked with Aysha Upchurch, research director of Project Zero at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education and founder of the classroom lab project HipHopEx to develop curriculum along with the teaching artists.

The program is divided into two six-week sessions in the fall focused on dance, music and stage presence and one 12-week session in the spring with younger students focused on

choreography and songwriting, and older students on writing, choreographing and producing their own music video.

During the first six-week session, 76 students at Washington and Leverett elementary schools, the Fayetteville Boys & Girls Club and Fayetteville ALLPS School of Innovation have participated in the program. The program is not only popular – it reached full enrollment as soon as it was announced – but it’s also making a positive impact on the students and the schools.

“This amazing program has given my students so much hope and joy,” said Michelle LeBlanc, teacher at Fayetteville ALLPS School of Innovation. “These kids are struggling in so many ways. This has given them an unforgettable moment to feel successful, to cultivate community and to grow as a team. I have no doubt it will be something they remember for the rest of their lives.”

The program will end in May with a live performance on Walton Arts Center’s stage and an originally produced EP album with four or five tracks.

## See creativity in action!

Scan here to watch the student’s self-produced music video. ➔





# Startin' Something in Northwest Arkansas

Michael Jackson's iconic music and signature moves are taking over Baum Walker Hall in 2025. The Tony Award®-winning musical *MJ* offers an insider's perspective of the artistry that catapulted Michael Jackson to international superstardom and legendary status. *MJ* was created by Tony Award-winning director/choreographer Christopher Wheeldon and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and playwright Lynn Nottage.

8 SHOWS /

May  
20-25

The show takes audiences behind the scenes as Michael Jackson prepares for his 1992 *Dangerous World Tour*. As the team rehearses the setlist – packed with Jackson's most famous tunes, including "Thriller," "Smooth Criminal," "Billie Jean," "Beat It" and "Bad" – audiences are transported back to pivotal moments in his life and witness the genius of Jackson's creative process. *The Washington Post* called *MJ* "a riveting

adrenaline rush of a show." WGN Radio said, "*MJ* is one of the best shows ever." It's thrilling sold out crowds on Broadway, in cities across North America and in London's West End, so don't miss the biggest musical of the decade as it brings its first national tour to Northwest Arkansas for eight performances May 20-25. You know the music, now come see the journey of one of the greatest artists of all time.

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NORTHWEST ARKANSAS NEWS

Jordan Markus as MJ and the cast of *MJ* first national tour. Photos by Matthew Murphy.





# Get Ready to Jam with Arkansas' Favorite Vocal Festival



The annual VoiceJam A Cappella Festival returns this year with concerts and workshops for all a cappella enthusiasts. From the headliner concert, The Edge Effect, on Friday, April 4 at 7:30pm, to workshops and the VoiceJam Competition on Saturday, April 5 at 7:30pm, to a “One-Day Choir” opportunity on Sunday, April 6, this is a celebration of all things a cappella!

Before the aca-amazing festival weekend, we sat down with Rob Dietz, one of this year’s competition judges and workshop instructors. Dietz is a multiple award-winning singer, vocal percussionist, composer and teacher, performing a cappella-style arrangements for over 20 years. He also served as a VoiceJam Competition judge in 2023.

**“It’s always fun to show off what the human voice is capable of!”**

- Rob Dietz

creative it is as an art form. There are just so many different ways the voice can be used! I was also big into both choral singing and pop singing, and a cappella felt like a really great way to bridge the two genres. As soon as I got to high school, I knew I had to try it for myself, so I got a few of my friends together and we started a quintet that sang together all the way through our senior year.

## How did you get into this performance style?

I started singing a cappella as a freshman in high school, though I discovered contemporary a cappella through my middle school choir teacher, and I was immediately drawn in by how

## What do you enjoy about a cappella competitions?

I love when groups bring a variety of different performance styles to competition. A cappella is a choice of instrumentation, not a genre – meaning you can sing a cappella in any genre you want! A lot of groups sing pop music, but there are often influences of jazz, hip-hop, R&B, country, gospel, soul – you name it. I love it when groups incorporate different genres for competition in ways that feel really unique to them – it can result in some very memorable musical moments! Plus it’s always fun to show off what the human voice is capable of! There’s a magic to hearing sounds come from another person and thinking “How did they do that?”

## What advice would you give to someone who is just getting started in a cappella?

Don’t be afraid to try new things and make mistakes! When I was getting into a cappella, it was in a pre-YouTube/Instagram/TikTok world – I’m grateful for that because it meant I got to make a lot of mistakes without my attempts winding up on the internet. These days, your very first performance can easily wind up out there for everyone to see, and that’s understandably scary! Know that nobody has it all figured out from day one, and don’t be afraid to give it a shot.

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# Underwoods Fine Jewelers

Tyler Hyde Underwood,  
Creative Director and Designer

Behind the scenes, a group of over 30 business leaders is making a difference at Walton Arts Center and beyond. The Corporate Leadership Council plans and helps promote fundraising events that support arts education programs, which seek to impact over 25,000 students and educators in Northwest Arkansas each year.

Tyler Hyde Underwood, creative director and designer for Underwoods Fine Jewelers, is a member of Walton Arts Center's Corporate Leadership Council, and we sat down with her to learn more about her experience.

## **Why did Underwoods Fine Jewelers decide to support Walton Arts Center?**

Underwoods has been a supporter of Walton Arts Center since the very beginning. Our founder, Bill Underwood, was able to appreciate the cultural significance of performing arts and saw a need for Fayetteville to have more access to that outlet. Having Walton Arts Center on Dickson Street has greatly contributed to the entire growth of NWA. We love supporting such an incredible organization that has pioneered the promotion of arts education and positively influences the creative direction in our area.

## **What led you to serve on CLC?**

Growing up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, I was a member of Les Jeunes Amis, or "Young Friends of The Symphony,"

where I fell in love with performing arts. As someone who was never inspired by academics in school, I experienced something groundbreaking from the creativity I saw when viewing those performances. After moving to Fayetteville, I realized that not only was there a world-class performing arts center down the street, but one that dedicated so much to promoting arts education. Even more so, arts education that impacts countless kids like me.

## **How can business leaders come together to support the arts?**

Our community would be very gray if it were all business and no play. Without the creativity that those in the performing arts space create, we wouldn't be where we are today as a region. I encourage you to consider supporting Walton Arts Center through its various events – not only does that support have the potential to color your world differently, but it opens you up to an energy that promotes creativity in your work life.

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**To connect your business with Walton Arts Center, contact Jeff Pratt, senior director of corporate partnerships, at [jpratt@waltonartscenter.org](mailto:jpratt@waltonartscenter.org)**

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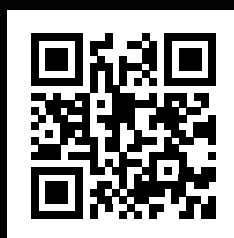
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