

The Philadelphia Inquirer

2025

FALL ARTS GUIDE

OVER 100
SHOWS,
CONCERTS,
& EXHIBITS TO
EXPERIENCE

WHERE TO EAT
BEFORE OR AFTER
THE THEATER

BEST NEW BOOKS
BY PHILLY AUTHORS



EDITOR'S NOTE



Grammy-nominated musician Nathalie Joachim is this season's Opera Philadelphia composer in residence. Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer

The arts start here

The end of summer is not dictated so much by Labor Day or the autumnal equinox as it is by a busy arts calendar. The beaches are closed, the vacations spent, and the warm glow of the theater beckons.

What better way to spend these fleeting, in-between days and evenings than sharing a space with strangers, experiencing art together, and then walking out feeling renewed?

The lights in the old Wanamaker store are back on (for a bit), and the ghosts of department stores past are being exorcised with sounds of flutes, organs, and humans. The Light Show is coming back, too. The Lansdowne Theater halls are ringing with music again, the ballerinas are putting on their dancing shoes, and the museums are preparing for new shows.

Read books by local authors in between shows, and when things

get too heavy, shake it off with a few laughs at comedy shows or catch an only-in-Philly performance at The Inquirer Food Festival at the Fillmore. Enjoy dinner after a play, and listen to a local podcast creator as you go on with your chores. You'll find all of that in more in this Inquirer Sunday Special, the 2025 Fall Arts Guide.

Yes, the leaves are turning but people are gearing up for that last gush of activity before the winter chill sets in. Fall is an excuse to stop, witness, think, plan, and arm ourselves with inspiration that will see us through the winter months. And to support the art and artists that fill our lives with joy.

Our fall arts guide is only a suggestion on where to start. Let it guide you as you take off into the magical world of Philadelphia arts. May it never cease to delight.

— *BEDATRI D. CHOUDHURY*

On the cover: Illustrator Mark Wang incorporated Philly landmarks like City Hall (with William Penn on sax), the Kimmel Center (with a piano-key roof), Independence Hall, the Comcast Center, and Swann Memorial Fountain into an arts-inspired image. A depiction of British singer Lola Young, coming to the Met in November, includes an Alexander Calder mobile earring.



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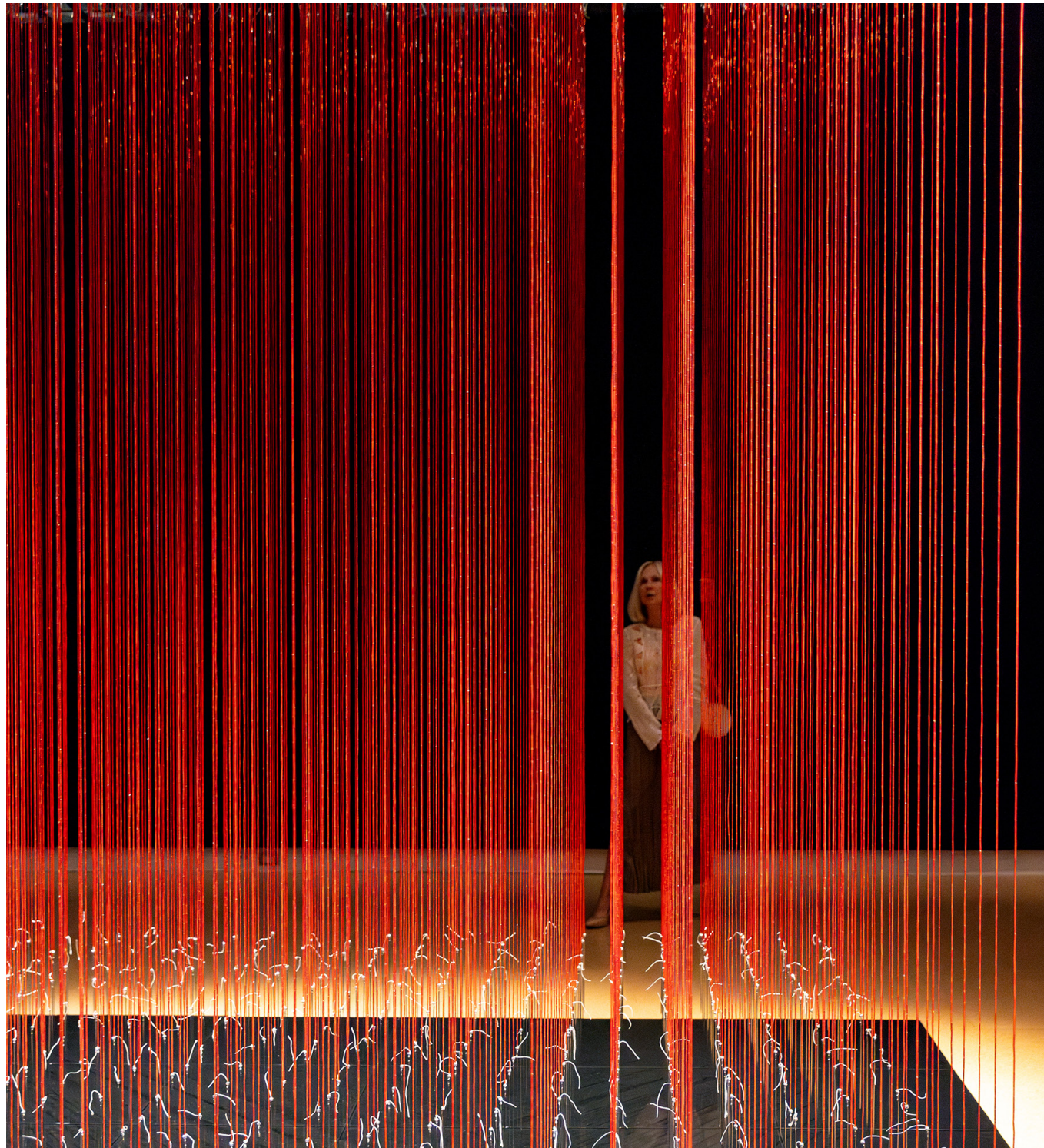
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VISUAL ART



Interwoven Light

AT THE MICHENER ART MUSEUM, ANILA QUAYYUM AGHA'S MIDCAREER RETROSPECTIVE SHOWCASES HER ART IN A VARIETY OF MEDIUMS.

By Bedatri D. Choudhury
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VISUAL ART

Anila Quayyum Agha was born to be an artist, and she knew it while still in elementary school in Murree, Pakistan.

“I was looking at the big picture window in my classroom,” said the artist, “the hills looked all the way down to Islamabad, and I painted that in watercolor. And the teacher had this strange look on her face and she said to me, ‘Anila, I think you’re going to be an artist.’”

Her midcareer retrospective, “Interwoven,” runs through Jan. 11 at the Michener Art Museum in Doylestown after debuting at Greensburg’s Westmoreland Museum of American Art.

Agha studied textile design at the National College of Arts in Lahore — at her mother’s urging, who told her she wouldn’t find work with a fine arts degree — and fiber arts at the University of North Texas. That was in the early 2000s when the art market labeled her a “craft artist,” several notches below an “actual” artist.

“Of course it’s all very gendered,” she said. “Often people say during critiques, ‘This looks very crafty. It looks like a hobbyist work.’ Fiber arts were considered less important.”

But it gave Agha an artistic superpower: The ability to work with a variety of mediums.

‘BEAUTIFUL AND CAPTIVATING’

“I was able to utilize the textile processes that were looked down upon, to be my ally. I already had a lot of experience with surface design,” she said.

That experience and expertise blooms in her large-scale, laser-cut steel light installations, whose patterns are reminiscent of South Asian textile patterns — memories of a dupatta or the border of a red wedding sari.

All the Flowers Are For Me (2016) is a deep red 60-by-60-by-60-inch steel cube, which is suspended from the ceiling, and whose sides are decked in ornate laser cuts. A lightbulb inside casts mesmerizing shadows on the surrounding walls, ceiling, and floor. Those watching are enveloped in these patterned shadows and become, at once, a spectator and participant of the art.

The piece, with its shadows, is spellbinding and is undoubtedly going to be a hit for Instagram selfies and posts.

“When people approach the work, they see something really beautiful and captivating. But Anila is also hoping that visitors will go beyond that and ask questions about identity, and how to help others feel welcome within a space,” said Laura Igoe, the chief

“I WAS ABLE TO UTILIZE THE TEXTILE PROCESSES THAT WERE LOOKED DOWN UPON, TO BE MY ALLY.”

curator of the museum.

“It’s political but without hitting you over the head with that message. It’s unfortunate today that creating work that’s about belonging and finding a home in a new place has to be controversial,” she said.

CLAIMING SPACE

The light installations, Agha said, helps her — an immigrant woman from South Asia — to occupy space, something that is systemically denied to women both in her native Pakistan and her now-home of the U.S.

“I take up and occupy this big space, it was a way to push back and say, ‘I’m brown, I’m female. I use patterns that come from textiles, carpets, architecture, and I’m occupying the biggest space I can possibly get. It’s vindication in some ways,” she said.

“The Michener has a really strong craft collection, which is very important to the region. Anila’s work is also very much grounded in craft, but she’s pushing at the boundaries of craft and fine art,” Igoe said. “And elevating women’s work of working in textiles and embroidery with many of her pieces, and that’s something we’re also interested in at the Michener.”

Among the 40 pieces in the show, Agha is the proudest of *A Flood of*





Tears (Gathering Storms) (2010 / 2023). It measures 12 by 12 by 16 feet and is made of upholstery needles, bugle, and hematite beads, and braided cotton — again a harking back to the crafts.

A cascade of bugle beads strung in straight lines hang in the air, buoyed by needles at one end. Because of the black glass floor, the chrome needles seem to disappear. They're all still there, sharp and pointed, but we just don't see them.

"Ten years ago, I started becoming very concerned about how the countries that had already paid the price for being colonized and having their resources stolen, like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, are now paying the price for climate change," said Agha. "So this piece is just like how climate

"All the Flowers Are for Me."
 Previous page, opening page:
 "Flight of a Thousand Birds,"
 "A Flood of Tears (*Gathering Storms*)," Cincinnati Art Museum (Flowers), Eskenazi Museum of Art at Indiana University (Flight), and courtesy of the artist

change is enveloping us, but we're perhaps not aware of the changes, but they're affecting us on a very deep level."

The pieces in the show date to work created in 2004 and encompass 20 years of her career here in the U.S.

"It occurred to me when I saw it all together," said Agha, "I was like, 'Damn girl! You made all that!' Absolutely, of course, nothing would've happened without so many people who helped me. You're always surrounded by supporters who raise you. I mean, I never really thought I'd be able to do this. I feel like an impostor quite often."

Michener Art Museum, 138 S. Pine St., Doylestown, michenerartmuseum.org.

THEATER



Victoria Clark as Kimberly in Broadway's "Kimberly Akimbo." Joan Marcus / Washington Post

Dinner and a Show

11 TOP THEATER PICKS OF THE SEASON — PLUS WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK BEFORE OR AFTER THE SHOW.

By Rosa Cartagena and Hira Qureshi
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Legends are coming to life in Philadelphia this fall, with a slate of theater productions that focus on historical figures from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (*The Mountaintop*) and Zora Neale Hurston (*Fire!!*), to rock-and-roll king Elvis and country star Johnny Cash (*Million Dollar Quartet*).

Among forthcoming crowd-favorite musicals are *Back to the Future: The Musical*, *Falsettos*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*.

New drama will arrive too, with contemporary shows like *Job* and *Wishing to Grow Up Brightly*, interrogating the terrifying potential of unfettered technology.

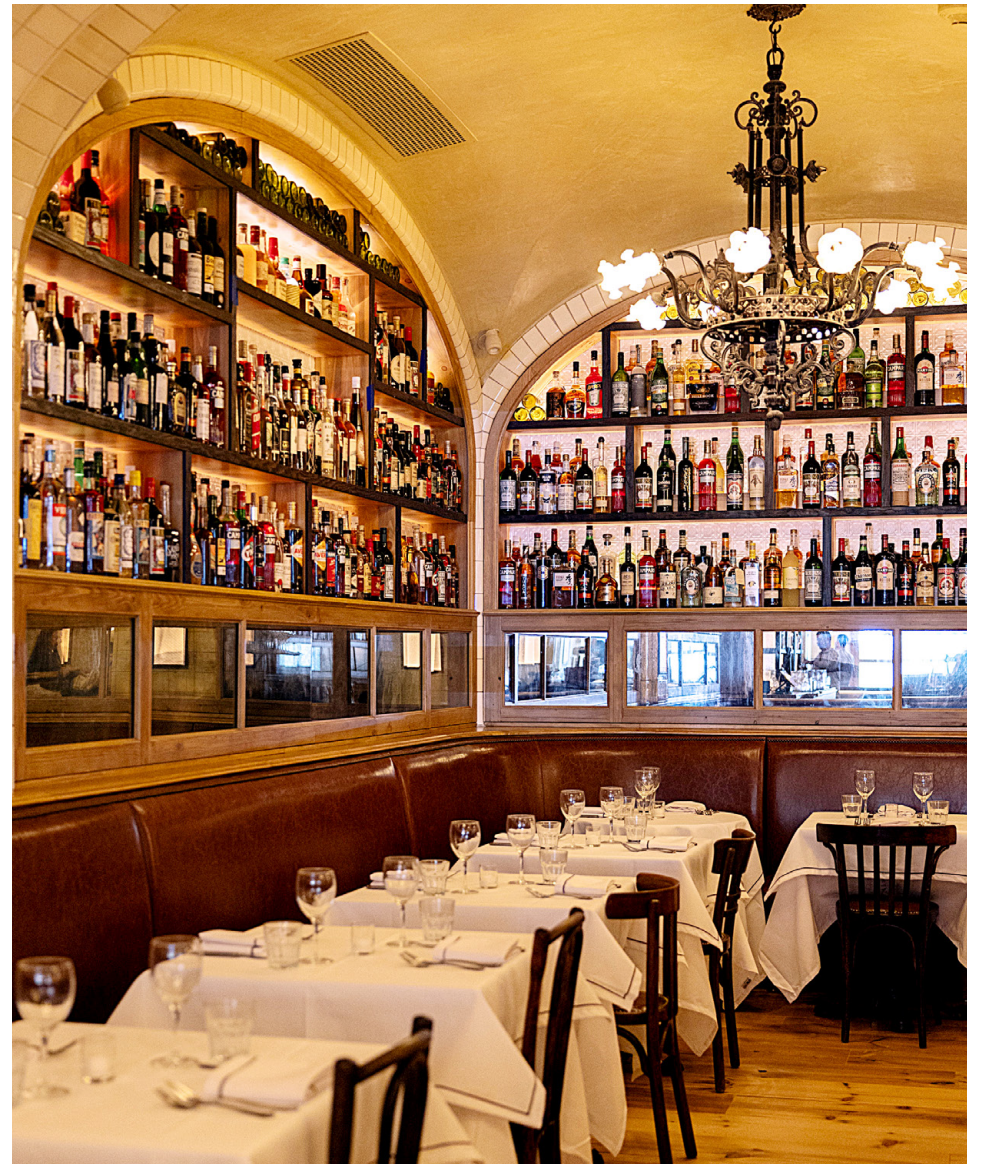
Here are 11 shows we can't wait to watch this fall, paired with drinking and dining recommendations near each theater.



Fork. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer



Oyster House. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer



Borromini. Tyger Williams / Staff Photographer



Barcelona Wine Bar. Craig LaBan / Staff

THEATER

'Falsettos'

SEPT. 25-OCT. 26, ARDEN THEATRE

Messy relationships and big feelings collide in this beloved, Tony-winning musical that debuted on Broadway in 1992. Music, lyrics, and book writer William Finn — working with *Into the Woods* writer James Lapine — leaned into his experiences as a gay Jewish New Yorker for a story centered on the charming-yet-neurotic star Marvin, who leaves his wife for his lover Whizzer.

But he still has his son's bar mitzvah to plan, and life gets even more complicated when Whizzer contracts AIDS and lands in the hospital. It'll make you laugh (just hear "Four Jews in a Room Bitching") and cry ("What More Can I Say?") before reminding everyone of the heartwarming power of family, both literal and chosen.

Dinner and Drinks: In Old City, **Royal Boucherie** offers classic French cuisine just a block from the Arden Theatre — perfect for a preshow dinner. Try escargot, steak frites, or branzino, and finish with crème brûlée. After the show, unwind at the loungey, neon-lit **Bleu Martini**, where you can sip on fruity, buzzy cocktails like a blueberry schnapps and floral vodka mix or a vanilla, cherry, and orange Bulleit cocktail. Or, if you're craving pizza, head to **The Angelo Pizza**.

ARDEN THEATRE, 40 N. SECOND ST., 215-922-1122
OR ARDENTHEATRE.ORG.

'Million Dollar Quartet'

SEPT. 30-NOV. 2, WALNUT STREET THEATRE

Most biographical musicals focus on a single artist's life, but *Million Dollar Quartet* transports audiences into the room where music legends met for one night only. It was Dec. 4, 1956, in Memphis, Tenn., when Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins entered Sun Records Studios — entirely by chance.

The musical celebrates this major moment in rock and roll history with a lean cast performing classics from the jam session, from "Blue Suede Shoes" to "I Walk the Line" to "Hound Dog."

It ends, fittingly, with the signature line:



"Tommy and Me" follows former Eagle Tommy McDonald's connection with legendary sportswriter Ray Didinger. Matt Urban

"Elvis has left the building."

Dinner and Drinks: Fuel up for the dancing with an Italian meal at **Giorgio on Pine**, which has a dedicated gluten-free menu. End the evening with a nightcap at **Dirty Franks**.

WALNUT STREET THEATRE, 825 WALNUT ST.,
215-574-3550 OR WALNUTSTREETTHEATRE.ORG.

'Tommy and Me'

OCT. 7-19, PEOPLE'S LIGHT

For both theater and sports nerds, *Tommy and Me* returns to Malvern following a sold-out run in January. Longtime commentator Ray Didinger penned this autobiographical play about his lifelong passion for the Eagles and, specifically, wide receiver Tommy McDonald.

Tom Teti will reprise his role as the star athlete. Didinger, who grew up in Folsom, idolized McDonald and developed an obsessive love for football. His play bounces between childhood flashbacks in the 1950s to his successful push to get McDonald into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1998. It's probably the most Philly play of the season.

Dinner and Drinks: Enjoy fresh pastas like spaghetti with clams and rigatoni with beef rib at **Restaurant Alba**, or indulge in beef Wellington, snapper soup, and

pretzel-crusted chicken schnitzel at **General Warren**.

PEOPLE'S LIGHT, 39 CONESTOGA RD., MALVERN,
610-644-3500 OR PEOPLESLIGHT.ORG.

'Fire!!'

OCT. 8-NOV. 2, QUINTESSENCE THEATRE

Actor/playwright Paul Oakley Stovall may still live in Chicago, but many of his plays open in Philadelphia. Fresh off the sold-out world premiere of *Giovanni's Room* this year, which he cowrote and directed, Stovall is back at Quintessence, focusing on a revolutionary literary magazine that only published one issue in 1926: *Fire!!* A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists.

Harlem Renaissance writers, including Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes, contributed to Wallace Thurman's *Fire!!*, which counted three Pennsylvanians among its first patrons. But after a single printing, its offices burned down and the publication ceased operations. Hughes and Hurston come to life in this play, which Stovall cowrote with Marilyn Campbell-Lowe; Azuka Theatre founder Raelle Myrick-Hodges will direct this world premiere.

Dinner and Drinks: Vegans, head over to the **Nile Cafe** for plant-based versions of jerk

chicken legs, stewed fish, and pepper steak. **Zsa's Ice Cream** is also nearby on Germantown Avenue for housemade flavors.

QUINTESSENCE THEATRE AT THE SEDGWICK THEATRE, 7137 GERMANTOWN AVE., 215-987-4450
OR QUINTESSENCE THEATRE.ORG.

'The Rocky Horror Show'

OCT. 10-NOV. 2, BUCKS COUNTY PLAYHOUSE

Celebrate Halloween in New Hope with the playhouse's annual production of this crass favorite. Broadway and reality TV actor Frankie Grande — whose pop star sister Ariana appears in another musical, *Wicked*, part two of which opens this fall — is back for a third year in a row to perform the iconic role of Dr. Frank-N-Furter.

Directed again by Hunter Foster (another talented brother, of theatrical powerhouse Sutton Foster), the musical follows one crazy, campy, and riotous night at the Transylvania home of a flamboyant, Frankenstein-like doctor. Audience members can join the fun with prop bags and get onstage for the finale to do the "Time Warp" agaaaaain.

Dinner and Drinks: Order handhelds such as steak house burgers or entrees like crab cakes at **Playhouse Deck Restaurant and Bar**, adjacent to the playhouse — all proceeds benefit the theater. Or head to **Stella of New Hope** for wild mushroom dumplings and housemade lobster ravioli.

BUCKS COUNTY PLAYHOUSE, 70 S. MAIN ST., NEW HOPE, 215-862-2121 OR BCP THEATER.ORG.

'Kimberly Akimbo'

OCT. 21-NOV. 2, ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Kim is new to her high school in Bergen County, but making friends and getting to an amusement park isn't all that she's worried about ahead of her 16th birthday: She has a genetic condition that causes her body to age more rapidly than normal and the average life expectancy is 16.

The relentlessly optimistic teen looks more like a grandma, but she befriends a group of outcasts who help her navigate her



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The Inquirer Food Festival!

dysfunctional family and possibly criminal high jinks with heartfelt, and often surprising, humor. Despite the tragic premise, the Tony-winning musical won't leave you in despair — it just might make you want to go to Six Flags.

Dinner and Drinks: At **Little Nonna's**, enjoy a cozy, low-lit space while savoring plates of bucatini cacio e pepe, and pan-seared gnocchi. And at Stephen Starr's newly opened **Borromini**, there's a 100-layer lasagna to enjoy.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC, 240 S. BROAD ST.,
215-893-1999 OR ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

'The Mountaintop'

OCT. 30-DEC. 14, ARDEN THEATRE

Playwright Katori Hall couldn't find a U.S. venue for her play about the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s final night alive — named for his famous last speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop." So she took it to London instead, to major success. It also led her to make history, as the first playwright of color to win the Laurence Olivier Award for best new play in 2010.

When it opened on Broadway the following year, Samuel Jackson played King, who spends his last hours in Memphis' Lorraine Motel talking to a fictional maid (Angela Bassett), a mysterious character who's more

than she seems. In this production, popular Arden actor Akeem Davis will take on the challenge of King.

Dinner and Drinks: Venture to Ellen Yin's **Fork** for braised pork shank and roasted lamb or Jose Garces' **Amada** for squid ink paella and steak à la plancha before the show. And **Sassafras Bar** for a nightcap after.

ARDEN THEATRE, 40 N. SECOND ST.,
215-922-1122 OR ARDENTHEATRE.ORG.

'Job'

OCT. 30-NOV. 23, THEATRE EXILE

Welcome to therapy, *Black Mirror* style. Jane is a Gen Z workaholic at a major tech company in California, but when a video of her office meltdown goes viral, she's sent to see Loyd, a hippie Baby Boomer therapist who has final say in whether she can return to work.

Determined and unhinged, Jane starts the session pointing a gun at his head. The next 80 minutes deliver a stomach-turning psychological thriller about the horrors of the internet age and entrenched generational divides told through smart, passionate arguments. Theatre Exile's producing artistic director Deborah Block directs, with Arianna Gayle (an understudy for the 2023 Broadway production) and Scott Greer starring.

Dinner and Drinks: Grab a glass of wine — think French rosé or German Riesling

— and tapas such as gazpacho, grilled oysters, and spiced beef empanadas at **Barcelona Wine Bar**. Feast on biryani, samosas, and gulab jamun at **Tiffin**. Or gnocchi and rigatoni at **Burrata**.

THEATRE EXILE, 1340-48 S. 13TH ST., 215-218-4022
OR THEATREEXILE.ORG.

'Wishing to Grow Up Brightly'

NOV. 5-23, THEATRE HORIZON

Musical director Amanda Morton typically works behind the scenes of productions, from *KPOP* to *Gutenberg! The Musical!* to the forthcoming Broadway adaptation of *Crazy Rich Asians*. This season, she's putting her own story center stage in the world premiere of this semiautobiographical musical that she cowrote with Theatre Horizon cofounder Matthew Decker, composer Josh Titora, and actor/writer Brenson Thomas.

The comedy follows a Korean adoptee returning home after her father's death and discovering that his voice and memories have been preserved by a company called reMemorex. But the surreal technology doesn't assuage her grief, it only unearths complicated and painful truths about why she was taken from her home in the first place.

Dinner and Drinks: For a quick, light bite, try a zep — a hoogie without lettuce — at **Eve's Lunch**. Craving Mexican? **El Limón** serves up al pastor tacos and chorizo enchiladas. And if it's tomato pie you're after, **Corropolese Bakery & Deli** is a must visit before or after the show.

THEATRE HORIZON, 401 DEKALB STREET,
NORRISTOWN, 610-283-2230 OR
THEATREHORIZON.ORG.

'Back to the Future: The Musical'

NOV. 18-30, ACADEMY OF MUSIC

The DeLorean lands in Center City in the Tony-nominated musical adaptation of the 1985 classic *Back to the Future*, with a book written by co-screenwriter Bob Gale. Unforgettable needle drops from the film

— including "Johnny B. Goode," "Earth Angel," and "Back in Time" — remain part of the story, accompanying original songs from *Back to the Future* composer Alan Silvestri and Jagged Little Pill lyricist Glen Ballard.

When wacky Doc Brown creates a time-travel machine, he gets sick in the process, so his young friend Marty McFly jumps in the car with hopes of finding a futuristic cure, until it backfires and he winds up in 1955. It only gets hilariously more complicated from there.

Dinner and Drinks: For \$40, get a three-course prix fixe pretheater dinner (think spanakopita, moussaka, salted caramel baklava) at **Estia Restaurant**. Head to **Oyster House** for oysters Rockefeller, chargrilled whole Maine lobster, chilled ceviche, sautéed mussels, and other seafood dishes.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC, 240 S. BROAD ST.,
215-893-1999 OR ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

'Little Women'

NOV. 26-JAN. 4, HEDGEROW THEATRE

Prolific playwright Kate Hamill has frequently adapted literary classics for theater, from *Pride and Prejudice* to *The Scarlet Letter* to *Dracula*, with a focus on feminist retellings and women-centered stories. In *Little Women*, based on Philadelphia-born author Louisa May Alcott's 1868 novel, Hamill puts a modern twist on the tale of four tightly bound yet very different sisters in the March family.

In this version, Jo, the fearless writer who chafes at the constraints of the patriarchy, becomes a genderqueer main character with a penchant for swashbuckling. Hamill herself has played Meg in previous productions, though at publication time, we don't yet know if she'll reprise the role once more.

Dinner and Drinks: Inquirer critic Craig LaBan says "some of the best Shanghai-style dim sum in the region" are at **Dim Sum-Mania**. For French fare, columnist Stephanie Farr recommends **La Belle Époque**, which she calls "fantastic" for its wine menu and praises its onion soup and other classic dishes.

HEDGEROW THEATRE, 64 ROSE VALLEY RD., MEDIA,
610-565-4211 OR HEDGEROWTHEATRE.ORG.



Don Stephenson and Lucas Hallauer in "Back to the Future." McLeod9 Creative




Peter Bernstein, left, will be joined by fellow guitar great Bobby Broom at Chris' Jazz Cafe. Drummer Makaya McCraven, right, plays a three-night residency at Solar Myth next month. Jimmy Katz, Itzi Marques

Jazz Standards

11 SHOWS TO PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR WHETHER YOU LOVE YOUR JAZZ MODERN OR TRADITIONAL.

By Shaun Brady, For The Inquirer

Jazz always evolves by bridging past and present, but the evidence of that can still come as a shock.

In the middle of “Amaranthine,” an otherwise thoroughly modern piece on Mary Halvorson’s latest album, *About Ghosts*, trumpeter Adam O’Farrill suddenly quotes the melody of the classic standard “My Ideal.”

The moment passes as quickly as it arises, but it’s a bracing reminder that the tradition remains even at its most unrecognizable.

That idea will manifest in a number of different ways in this fall’s jazz concerts, including two hip-hop-reared drummer-producers offering postmodern mash-ups, a span of generations sharing a single stage, and other provocative sounds.

Below are 11 highlights of the coming months’ offerings, though each of these venues and presenters are offering a full calendar worth delving into.

Joe McPhee & the Ghost

OCT. 1, 2223 FISH

The expansive ground that Joe McPhee has covered is remarkable, even for his 85 years. McPhee is a multi-instrumentalist, accomplished on a variety of saxophones and trumpets, on top of being a poet of visceral emotion.

Emerging from the free jazz crucible of Coltrane, Ornette, and Ayler, McPhee has been voracious in his improvisatory appetites, forging strong collaborations with scenes in NYC, Chicago, and Europe. For this Fire Museum-presented date, he’ll partner with the Ghost, a queer-centric trio led by saxophonist Michael Foster. FIREMUSEUMPRESENTS.COM.

Makaya McCraven; Nate Smith

OCT. 4-6, SOLAR MYTH; OCT. 11, PERELMAN THEATER

Thirty years ago, it seemed innovative when jazz and hip-hop converged. Now, it seems

inevitable, less a convergence than evidence that both emanated from a common root. So it’s unsurprising that so many jazz drummers also make creative producers in the hip-hop world — Kassa Overall, who played Solar Myth recently, is another case in point.

Within one week in October, Philly audiences will have three chances to catch the recombinant, free-improv style of Makaya McCraven, while veteran drummer-turned-viral-sensation Nate Smith brings his memoiristic beat science to the Perelman Theater for one night. arsnova-workshop.org; ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

Marshall Allen Trio with Ade Ilu Ensemble

OCT. 12, THE PERCH

It continues to be nothing less than remarkable that saxophonist Marshall Allen is still going strong well past his 101st birthday. His new album, *The Omniverse Oriki*, grew out of a Halloween night concert in 2023, when Allen’s trio joined the Afro Cuban Yoruban percussion ensemble, Ade Ilu, onstage. Then again two days later in the studio to recapture the magic.

Philly percussionist and bandleader Kevin Diehl will reconvene the raucous and questing crew once more to celebrate the album’s release. FIREMUSEUMPRESENTS.COM.



Vocalist Samara Joy, left, returns to Philadelphia at the Miller Theater on November 11. Veteran drummer Joe Farnsworth, right, heads to Chris' Jazz Cafe with rising-star pianist Emmet Cohen in December. Courtesy of Ensemble Arts Philly, Jimmy Katz

Artifacts Trio

OCT. 17-18, SOLAR MYTH

When flutist Nicole Mitchell, cellist Tomeka Reid, and drummer Mike Reed first got together a decade ago, all three were representative of a younger generation of artists nurtured by Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Their first album was an homage to the organization's elders, reimagining works by the likes of Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, and Amina Claudine Myers.

Their 2021 follow-up, ...and *Then There's This*, largely consisted of originals by the trio, all by now well established as vital figures advancing the AACM's "ancient to the future" ethos. ARSNOWWORKSHOP.ORG.

Cécile McLorin Salvant

NOV. 2, THE ANNENBERG CENTER

It's well established that Cécile McLorin Salvant is the most visionary jazz vocalist of her generation. But since signing onto the genre-averse Nonesuch label, she's turned her instinct for reinvention inward.

Her latest, *Oh Snap*, is ferociously playful, as it juggles '70s soul, psych-folk, show tunes, blues, and disco, and captures moments in unconventional spaces. It experiments with

tech like Auto-Tune and GarageBand with a hobbyist's glee and a virtuoso's inventiveness. PENNLIVEARTS.ORG.

Exit Zero Jazz Festival

NOV. 7-9, CAPE MAY

The best way to avoid Shore traffic is to wait until summer's over altogether. Twice-a-year festival Exit Zero offers a number of good reasons to visit Cape May in the off-season.

This fall's iteration of the fest is highlighted by the return of long-dormant vocalist Cassandra Wilson, celebrating the 30th anniversary of her landmark Blue Note album *New Moon Daughter*; the revival of *Crisol*, the Latin-tinged sextet formed by the late trumpet great Roy Hargrove; and a sure-to-be-crowd-pleaser of a set by Philly-born bass legend Stanley Clarke. EXITZEROJAZZFESTIVAL.COM.

Samara Joy

NOV. 11, MILLER THEATER

Though she's 25, Samara Joy has ascended to the jazz vocal pantheon in a breathtakingly short time, and her year-end shows are fast becoming a Philly holiday tradition. In recent years, she's been joined by her family, including members of Philly gospel group

the Savettes.

This time around, the spotlight will be on Joy and her warm, radiant voice, and her elegant but never hidebound take on the tradition. ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

Air Legacy Trio

NOV. 14, SOLAR MYTH

In recent years, saxophonist Henry Threadgill has firmly established himself among the pantheon of modern composers, earning a Pulitzer Prize for music, being named an NEA Jazz Master, and publishing an acclaimed memoir. The uniqueness of his vision has been dazzlingly evident since he emerged in the 1970s with *Air*, his singular trio with bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Steve McCall.

That early music lives on with this new trio, led by Threadgill's own choice, multi-instrumentalist Marty Ehrlich, with drummer Pheeroan akLaff, and bassist Hilliard Greene. ARSNOWWORKSHOP.ORG.

Peter Bernstein Trio with Bobby Broom

NOV. 28-29, CHRIS' JAZZ CAFÉ

Six-string aficionados have reason to give thanks this year, as two of jazz's most

scintillating guitarists share the stage at Chris' over the holiday weekend. Peter Bernstein is an ingenious and eloquent player with an effortless but profound sense of swing and a rapid-fire wit.

A frequent visitor to the club, he'll be joined this time by Bobby Broom, a longtime Chicagoan best known for his long association with Sonny Rollins with a penchant for organ trio (which will find him right at home in Philly) and a raucous blues flavor to his sound. CHRISJAZZCAFE.COM.

Dianne Reeves

DEC. 7, ANNENBERG CENTER

Singer Dianne Reeves has released dozens of albums during her four-decade career, including a memorable 20-year run on Blue Note, that helped earn her Jazz Master status and five Grammys. Only one of those albums celebrates the holidays — 2004's *Christmas Time is Here* — but one is all it takes to become a perennial.

It helps that the album boasts an all-star band that ensures it doesn't wear out its welcome amid the glut of ubiquitous Christmas songs. Reeves revisits those yuletide classics at the Annenberg this season. PENNLIVEARTS.ORG.

Joe Farnsworth Trio with Emmet Cohen

DEC. 12-13, CHRIS' JAZZ CAFÉ

A rollicking drummer with a buoyant swing feel, Joe Farnsworth spent much of his career as the first call for a number of legendary elders: McCoy Tyner, Pharoah Sanders, Harold Mabern, Benny Golson. Lately he's graduated to mentor status himself, leading bands for the first time where he's the oldest cat in the room.

At Chris', he'll play host to one of that new generation, the pianist Emmet Cohen, who has amassed an enormous internet fan base while also seeking out legends to learn from. CHRISJAZZCAFE.COM.

DANCE



BalletX dancer Minori Sakita in Noelle Kayser's "Scales on the Wings of a Butterfly." Scott Serio / BalletX

Season in Motion

THESE 8 INSPIRED DANCE PERFORMANCES ARE POISED TO BRING STAGES TO LIFE THIS FALL AND WINTER.

By **Ellen Dunkel**
EDUNKEL@INQUIRER.COM

After the summer, when most dancers are off (although many perform in festivals and special events), the dance season returns to Philadelphia in full swing in the fall.

Philadelphia Ballet is transporting us from the United States to artistic director Angel Corella's native Spain for a program featuring two of his ballets, *Carmen* and *Bolero*.

Then it moves on to the most intriguing

program of the season, an "Evening of Horror," as we get closer to Halloween. This includes a Lizzy Borden ballet and a world premiere about a psychological nightmare.

BalletX is marking its 20th anniversary with a look back at the many works it commissioned, as well as a new ballet. Philadanco is also working on the theme of old and new with two favorite works and two new ones.

The season wraps up with some fun: MOMIX is bringing back its inventive *Alice in Wonderland*-inspired piece, and Philadelphia Ballet is returning to the classic George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*.

'Carmen' and 'Boleró'

OCT. 9-12, ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Philadelphia Ballet artistic director Angel Corella leaned into his Spanish heritage in the past two years, choreographing *Carmen* in 2023 and following that up with *Bolero* in 2024. Creating these pieces from scratch, Corella said, made him realize that he was a choreographer and not just a director who wanted more from existing works.

For the season opener, Corella opted to pair up these works, which should bring a program of drama and familiar music from Bizet (*Carmen*) and Ravel (*Bolero*).

\$20-\$276, 215-893-1999

ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

Evening of Horror

OCT. 16-19, ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Just days after Philadelphia Ballet's Spanish program closes, the company will mark the spooky season with another dramatic program. Its "Evening of Horror" includes Agnes de Mille's 1948 *Fall River Legend*, based on the story of Lizzie Borden. It will also feature the world premiere of *Valley of Death*, by the company's resident choreographer, Juliano Nunes.

Set to music by Ralph Vaughan Williams and Sergei Rachmaninoff, the ballet describes *Valley of Death* as a masked ball that turns into a psychological nightmare.

\$20-\$271, 215-893-1999

ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

BalletX

OCT. 29-NOV. 9, SUZANNE ROBERTS THEATER

BalletX is turning 20 this year and is celebrating with two programs featuring a retrospective of its works. It specializes in commissioning new work, so the Oct. 29-Nov. 2 program will include pieces from its first decade, while Nov. 2-9 will feature work choreographed in its second decade.

The second program will also include a new piece, a world premiere by Keelan Whitmore. \$65-\$90, 215-225-5389 X250
BOXOFFICE@BALLETX.ORG.



Philadelphia Ballet in Angel Corella's "Boleró." Alexander Iziliaev

Ephrat Asherie Dance with Arturo O'Farrill

NOV. 14-15, ANNENBERG CENTER

Shadow Cities is a world premiere and co-commission among the Annenberg's Penn Live Arts and several other organizations.

Set to the original music by Grammy-winning jazz pianist Arturo O'Farrill, it will feature Ephrat Asherie Dance's mix of street and club dance styles and focus on cultures, identities, and generations, and how we are both fixed and in flux.

\$51-\$101, 215-898-3900
PENNLIVEARTS.ORG.



Ephrat Asherie Dance will be performing the world premiere of "Shadow Cities" at the Annenberg Center in November. Nir Arieli / For The Inquirer

'Cinderella'

NOV. 22-23, MULLER AUDITORIUM AT ABINGTON FRIENDS SCHOOL

The Metropolitan Ballet Academy is celebrating 30 years of training dancers, many of whom wind up with ballet careers.

To open its season, its affiliated Metropolitan Ballet Company will be performing its take on the classic fairytale ballet *Cinderella* at Abington Friends School. Part of its family concert series, this performance is appropriate to all ages.

\$25 ADULTS, \$20 CHILDREN, 215-663-1665,
METROPOLITANBALLETACADEMY.COM.

Philadanco

DEC. 5-7, PERELMAN THEATER

Philadanco has been bringing Black dance to audiences in Philadelphia and around the world for more than 55 years. For its winter residency at the Kimmel Center, it is performing a program called "Then & Now." It will feature two existing works: Donald Byrd's *Everybody* (from 1996) and Tommie Waheed-Evans' *With(in)verse* (from 2018).

The program will also include two new works, a company premiere by Ronald K.

Brown and a world premiere by Juel D. Lane.

\$43-\$63, 215-893-1999 OR

ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

MOMIX

DEC. 12-14, ANNENBERG CENTER

MOMIX always has a quirky, fun take on whatever they perform, and its 2022 *Alice*, based on *Alice in Wonderland*, was especially popular.

The company is bringing it back to the Annenberg to close out 2025.

\$51-\$101, 215-898-3900 PENNLIVEARTS.ORG.

George Balanchine's 'The Nutcracker'

DEC. 5-31, ACADEMY OF MUSIC

No December would be complete without the *Nutcracker*, and few ballet companies let the season pass without performing it.

Philadelphia Ballet is bringing back the George Balanchine classic for nearly a month's worth of performances.

\$28-\$282, 215-893-1999

ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

PODCAST

Emotional Detective

PHILLY PODCASTER YOWEI SHAW PAIRS STRANGERS WITH UNLIKELY YET INTIMATE CONNECTIONS ON *PROXY*.

By Zoe Greenberg
ZGREENBERG@INQUIRER.COM

George had a problem, and he had reached out to Yowei Shaw for help.

After a decade-plus relationship, his wife had come out as queer and divorced him. (George is a Midwesterner using a pseudonym.)

Shaw, the Philly-based creator and founder of the new podcast *Proxy* (proxypodcast.com), listened to his story and began her search for help.

The divorce wasn't the issue — it was more the dizzying emotional disorientation that followed. George had gone to therapy and divorce groups and talked with friends, but no one could exactly relate. His ex wasn't eager



Philly-based podcast host Yowei Shaw does most of her planning and writing from the bedroom of her Wissahickon rowhouse. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

to talk. Most fundamentally, he wanted to understand how his life had changed so suddenly.

So Shaw tracked down the perfect proxy: a queer woman who had also left her straight marriage and was open to talking it through with George.

The recorded conversation that followed was an intimate and revealing one between two people who had never met, but who understood something vital about each other's lives.

That is *Proxy*.

Half its episodes are recorded social experiments, where guests are paired with strangers who serve as proxies to help solve their “niche emotional conundrums”; the other half is a broader exploration of how emotions impact hot-button issues like polarization or restorative justice.

Shaw, 37, jokingly calls herself an emotional investigative journalist — but she's not really joking.

“We believe you can get special insight by talking to a stranger who's outside your situation — because you can ask questions you wouldn't be able to ask, say things you wouldn't be able to say, be less defensive, more open,” she explained on George's episode, “Bisexual Wife Guy.”

FINDING THE PERFECT STRANGER

For different cases, Shaw has tracked down different kinds of proxies: On some episodes, guests are paired with researchers who have the ideal expertise; on others, they're matched with peers who have gone through a similar experience, as in a support group.

The most thrilling episodes pair a protagonist, like George, with a stranger-antagonist, someone who has experience similar to that of the “villain” in the guest's story.

Shaw asks certain questions before determining whether a guest is right for the show: Do they have other supports? Are they in active trauma? (If so, they aren't a good fit.) Is the conundrum primarily an emotional one, making it right for the show, or is it a material one?

Despite the ubiquity of podcasts, it's not a particularly easy time to launch a new, independent one, especially if you're not a celebrity.

Shaw, who grew up in Pittsburgh and Houston, first fell in love with audio as a student at the University of Pennsylvania, before the 2015 *Serial* boom. As a freelancer, she taught youth media, worked as a temp on *Fresh Air*, reported a story for *This American Life*, and then became a full-time producer and host of NPR's popular science show, *Invisibilia*.

In 2023, the show was canceled and Shaw was laid off from NPR, part of an industry-wide bust that made up what *Vulture* described as “the podcast world's year from hell.”

PROXY IS BORN

She pitched the idea for *Proxy* to a number of companies, but she didn't want to give up ownership of her intellectual property, so no deals panned out.

In May 2024, she launched the show herself, with a Patreon where listeners support the effort. She has since joined Radiotopia from PRX, an independent network of podcasts that distributes and sells ads for shows.

Her husband, Kyle Pulley, a music producer who co-owns Headroom Studios in Clifton Heights, agreed to help with the sound mixing. Shaw refers to Pulley as her “bedraggled podcast spouse,” and his reluctant

THE MOST THRILLING EPISODES LINK A PROTAGONIST WITH A STRANGER WHO HAS HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE



involvement is a running joke on the show.

The effort is enormous, and the chance of making a true hit — a show that could support Shaw and a small team— is slim, Shaw said. She is still trying to figure out how to gain listeners and ask for money (the topic of a recent episode).

She will not say how many listeners the show has currently, though it charted at No. 2 in science podcasts this year, and made a Top 150 list of podcasts globally. She received two media grants this summer and is planning a major fundraising campaign.

PAYING ATTENTION TO EMOTIONS

Many of the initial guests and proxies are known names in the podcasting world, from *S-Town* host Brian Reed, who came on the show to talk

about his struggle caregiving for his mother-in-law with Alzheimer's, to *Radio Atlantic* host Hanna Rosin, who served as George's proxy.

Proxy is recorded from a Whisper Room sound booth on the second floor of Shaw and Pulley's Wissahickon rowhouse.

Because Shaw is producing the show almost entirely herself on a shoestring budget — with the help of editor Tim Howard and sometimes part-time producers — the hours are long and constant, with Pulley helping out on top of his full-time job.

For future episodes, Shaw is soliciting cases from listeners, hoping to find the perfect proxies for them. She said she's driven by a desire to get to the emotional root of things.

"Emotions are a huge part of every story, of every problem, of every issue," she said, "and we don't pay enough attention."

Shaw's husband, music producer Kyle Pulley, provides technical support on her podcast, including help with the sound booth. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

MUSIC

Roots and Resonance

NATHALIE JOACHIM, OPERA PHILADELPHIA'S NEW COMPOSER IN RESIDENCE, SHOWCASES HER HAITIAN HERITAGE THROUGH A GIFT FOR STORYTELLING.

By David Patrick Stearns, For The Inquirer





Flutist and composer Nathalie Joachim will soon bring full houses to the Academy of Music. Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer

MUSIC

Whether Nathalie Joachim is playing electronic flute, composing an opera, or singing in Creole at World Cafe Live, she is always drawing on a cultivated worldview that's not typical of her fellow Juilliard School graduates.

With a mile-long resume that includes an assistant professorship at Princeton University, a Grammy Award nomination, and now, Opera Philadelphia's 2025-2026 composer-in-residence position, she indeed has her layers but seems remarkably rooted in a single place.

Growing up in Brooklyn, now living near the Italian Market in Philadelphia, the 41-year-old Joachim resides spiritually in her Haitian heritage. An all-around artist with an assured identity, she introduced her songs at last year's World Cafe Live concert talking about the world's interpersonal complexities, almost like a nurturing therapist.

"I think my own therapist would disagree with that," she said, laughing.

Compared to some therapists, Joachim is succinct and nonconfrontational.

Undeniably therapeutic, her music is basically poetic storytelling. In many pieces, her voice and/or flute is accompanied by clouds of electronic sound that couldn't be more modern, though she sees herself in the tradition of a griot, a revered figure in many West African communities.

"They collect the stories of the community and reflect them back so that they're able to see pieces of themselves in it," she said.

It doesn't matter that details in her songs may be lost on listeners who don't speak Creole.

GIFT OF STORYTELLING

"The experience of opera is not that we should be tracking each word, but hearing a story in sound," said Opera Philadelphia general director and president Anthony Roth Costanzo. "She has so much command of color in the sounds that she makes," he said of Joachim.

Also, her storytelling gift was one of the main factors in her becoming composer in residence. It also falls in line with Roth Costanzo's "Opera, but different" philosophy.

What form her sensibility could take in her opera in progress — working title is *Le présent éternel* after a painting of the same name by Afro Cuban surrealist painter Wifredo Lam — has dizzying possibilities.

Lam's imagery has the density of a rainforest with strange semi-animalistic figures that are loaded with mystical symbolism. Parts of the opera will be heard in Philadelphia in a to-be-announced date this fall following workshop performances on Nov. 16 at New York's Museum of Modern Art (where Joachim was scholar in residence 2024-2025) and Nov. 18 at nearby Zankel Hall.

Expect something more in the neighborhood of Philip Glass' free-flowing, abstract *Einstein on the Beach* than Verdi's *Aida*.

"[Traditional] opera tends to default into a base level of human understanding," Joachim said, "instead of trusting the listener with something greater than the most basic tropes."

No less unpredictable is *Complications in Sue*, to be performed Feb. 4-8, at the Academy of Music — about a split-personality woman, with each of the 10 decades of her life dramatized by a different composer, all of them major names in the field: Missy Mazzoli, Nico Muhly, Rene Orth, Errollyn Wallen, and Joachim.

She enjoys being a team composer — and taking a break from her deep immersion in surrealism. The different compositional voices appeal to her appreciation of collage techniques. "That's something that speaks deeply to my spirit," she said.

EMBRACING HAITI'S ENERGY

In her Feb. 25 Philadelphia Chamber Music Society recital with violinist Yvonne Lam, she will return to more familiar ground with a preview of her already-finished but unreleased third solo album. The concert is titled "Solitude + SPAC E," and "explores this idea of what it means to be isolated in a hyperconnected world."

With such awareness of modern paradoxes, it's no wonder Joachim has sought deep connections with her ancestral home in Haiti — specifically, land that has been in her family for seven generations.

"Almost everybody is migratory. I know very few people who have that long a connection to any piece of land — anywhere," she said.

"Very few Black people had ownership in that way for that long. It's a special, protected place that my family has been tending to almost as long as Haiti has been Haiti ... There's an energy there that's quite magical ... something I sense and cherish."

Inevitably, she crosses paths with Haitian voodoo, traditional melodies that have found their way into her songs — not the black magic voodoo portrayed in Hollywood films, but a



Joachim says her family's connection to Haiti is "something I sense and cherish." Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer

rich benevolent network of cultural mythology.

"Its connection with the natural world, the connection with the earth ... is very real," Joachim said. "It's something I engaged with, [but] I'm not in the practice formally."

'A TOOLBOX OF EXPRESSION'

A catalyst in her overall cultural exploration was her grandmother Ipheta Fortuma (1918-2015) and not just philosophically. She showed Joachim how her voice could be used in the act of storytelling. That kind of contact with her voice is something Joachim says she almost lost during her years at Juilliard, where she started at age 10, cycling through the prep department and college division program, from 1996 to 2005.

That training took her to the acclaimed ultra-new-music ensemble, eighth blackbird, with whom she played for seven years. Now, Juilliard is something she pushes back on. Not that such training was wrong. It's just not central to what she now does.

"That training wasn't about music making as much as becoming an athlete ... and performing at a very high level," she said. "I've kind of closed that chapter of my life. I'm less excited about perfection and more about using it as a tool in a toolbox of expression. It's one facet of the tool but not the facet of the toolbox."

operaphila.org.

MUSIC



Top Pop

Jon Batiste brings his “Big Money” tour to the Met Philly on Oct. 30. Beth Sacca

OUR CRITIC PICKS TWO DOZEN OF FALL'S BEST POP MUSIC CONCERTS IN PHILLY AND THE REGION.

By Dan DeLuca
DDELUCA@INQUIRER.COM

The stadium-sized summer is behind us, and it's time for pop music to move inside.

Besides those highlighted below, other concerts of note at the newly renamed Xfinity Mobile Arena are **Mumford & Sons** on Oct. 14, **Billie Eilish** on Oct. 23, and **Playboi Carti** on Nov 10.

Plus, there's **Neko Case** on Oct. 4 and **Big Thief** on Oct. 22 at the Met Philly, and **Gigi Perez** at Franklin Music Hall Oct. 16.

And just to keep the avian outfits straight: The jammy Connecticut band that is playing the final show of the Mann Center season on Oct. 4 is **Goose**. The arty New York rock band at Union Transfer on Nov. 10? That's **Geese**.

Los Lobos / X

SEPT. 28, MILLER THEATER

The “99 Years of Rock ‘n Roll Across the U.S.” tour combines the talents of these two bands that got their start in the Los Angeles area in the mid-1970s, when American (and Mexican) roots music collided with punk. Both deserve to be in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

Lorde

SEPT. 30, XFINITY MOBILE ARENA

After unplugging for 2021's vaguely psychedelic *Solar Power*, Ella Yelich-O'Connor — aka Lorde — is back on the electronic trip on her new *Virgin*. That's a good thing, as the New Zealand pop star, 28, continues her growing

up in public project with producer Jim-E Stack. XFINITYMOBILEARENA.COM.

NBA Young Boy

OCT. 3, XFINITY MOBILE ARENA

NBA, in this case, has nothing to do with basketball. The workaholic Baton Rouge, La., rapper born Kentrell DeSean Gauden's moniker stands for “Never Broke Again.” And he likely never will be, with more than two dozen albums released since 2016. XFINITYMOBILEARENA.COM.

Raphael Saadiq

OCT. 4, KESWICK THEATRE

The Tony! Toni! Toné! cofounder's “No

MUSIC

Bandwidth” tour is a one-man show, with music and stories, of which he has plenty, having worked with Erykah Badu, Beyoncé, Jill Scott, Stevie Wonder, and Whitney Houston. KESWICKTHEATRE.COM.

Lily Seabird

OCT. 10, THE 700

Bucks County-born songwriter Lily Seabird says her excellent new *Trash Mountain* on Philly’s Lame-O label is about “late-stage capitalism, technology, climate change, my shortening attention span, and “shifting relationships and our ability to deal with the past and move forward.” In other words, it’s universal! 4333COLLECTIVE.NET.

Alex G

OCT. 11-12, THE FILLMORE

Havertown-bred indie songwriter Alex Giannascoli has released his major label debut with his 10th and possibly best album, *Headlights*. As always, the slightly askew and mysterious songs are bewitching and full of subtle charm. He’s finishing a U.S. tour with two Fishtown shows. FILLMOREPHILLY.COM.

Philly Music Fest

OCT. 13-19, VARIOUS VENUES

This year’s Philly Music Fest gets off to a banner start with two nights at Ardmore Music Hall with Dr. Dog, fresh off the band opening for the Lumineers at Citizens Bank Park. Then the PMF carries on over five more nights in as many clubs, including the fest’s first metal show at Milkboy Philly and first time at the Fallser Club in East Falls. PHILLYMUSICFEST.COM.

David Byrne

OCT. 16-18, THE MET

Talking Heads nation is not getting the reunion tour they so desperately crave, but David Byrne is having an active 2025:



John Legend is performing in Atlantic City on Nov. 1 followed by the Met on Nov. 5. Gaelle Beri / For The Inquirer

whether hopping onstage at the Governors Ball with Olivia Rodrigo, announcing his impending nuptials, or releasing a new album *Who Is the Sky*. THEMETPHILLY.COM.

Jeff Tweedy

OCT. 20, UNION TRANSFER

When Wilco played the Met Philly in August, Jeff Tweedy half-joked that Philadelphia “is the city that complains the most that we don’t come here.” Wilco isn’t coming back just yet, but Tweedy is, on a tour for his new 30-song solo album *Twilight Override*, with a band that includes his sons, Spencer and Sammy. UTPHILLY.COM.

Joan Shelley

OCT. 23, HARMONIE HALL

The Kentucky folk singer whose music exudes a soul-soothing calm has a new album, *Real Warmth*, on Philadelphia’s No Quarter records. She’s playing the cozy Harmonie Hall, an 1981 historic building in Manayunk. HARMONIEHALL.SPACE.

Laufey

OCT. 24, XFINITY MOBILE ARENA

Iceland singer Laufey’s rise has been rapid. The clever, fashion-forward presentation of her new *A Matter Of Time* has sent

her into the pop stratosphere, surpassing the popularity of fellow JazzTok stars like Samara Joy and Stella Cole, who also have Philly gigs this fall. Pronounced “Lay-vay.” XFINITYMOBILEARENA.COM.

Rufus Wainwright

OCT. 25-26, CITY WINERY

There’s no telling which of his intriguing projects Rufus Wainwright will be pulling from. A stage musical version of John Cassavetes’ 1977 film *Opening Night*? His *Rufus Does Judy* ode to Judy Garland, or *Dream Requiem*, his 2025 album, which fuses Verdi and Lord Byron? It’s a solo show. CITYWINERY.COM/PHILADELPHIA.

Thundercat

OCT. 29, FRANKLIN MUSIC HALL

Stephen Bruner has the best bassist stage name ever, and the anime-loving Los Angeles musician also has an ecumenical musical spirit that's led him to collaborate with Kendrick Lamar, Kamasi Washington, Haim, and Tame Impala, among others. BOWERYPRESENTS.COM.

Bryan Adams

OCT. 8, XFINITY MOBILE ARENA

The Canadian "Summer of '69" rocker and photographer is touring in support of his new *Roll With the Punches* that will also include plenty of hits. Rock & Roll Hall of Famer Pat Benatar opens, with her husband Neil Giraldo. XFINITYMOBILEARANA.COM.

Jon Batiste

OCT. 30, THE MET

Grammy winning life force and former Stephen Colbert band leader Jon Batiste is more of a charmer than ever on his new album, *Big Money*. He plays guitar, mandolin, and fiddle, as well as piano. The album features Randy Newman and Andra Day, who opens this show, along with Diana Silvers. THEMETPHILLY.COM.



Lola Young brings her alt-pop tunes to Philly in November. [Conor Cunningham](http://ConorCunningham.com)

John Legend

NOV. 1, OCEAN RESORT; NOV. 5, THE MET

University of Pennsylvania grad John Legend recorded his debut album, *Get Lifted*, on his 26th birthday on Dec. 28, 2004. This year, he's celebrating the album's 20th anniversary, which brings him to Atlantic City and North Broad Street. THEOCEANAC.COM, THEMETPHILLY.COM.

Lola Young

NOV. 8, THE MET

Being frank about being "Messy" is rising British alt-pop star Lola Young's calling card. The songwriter, whose music recalls a more rugged, less tidy Lily Allen, and is sure to please Billie Eilish fans, is following her 2024 breakthrough *This Wasn't Meant For You Anyway* with the new *I'm Only F**king Myself*. THEMETPHILLY.COM.

Marc Cohn & Shawn Colvin

NOV. 8, LANSDOWNE THEATER

Veteran singer-songwriters Cohn and Colvin are highlights at the Lansdowne, the 1927 movie palace that reopened after nearly 40 years with a \$21 million renovation. So far, it's mostly tribute bands, plus Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett on Oct. 24 and 25. Once bands get a look at the place, it'll get busier. LANDSDOWNETHEATER.COM.

Bill Murray & his Blood Brothers

NOV. 15, PARX CASINO

Bill Murray's fellow *Saturday Night Live* cast members Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi had their Blues Brothers. Now Murray has his Blood Brothers, a classic rock cover band loaded with legitimate blues-rock firepower, with three ace guitarists in Mike Zito, Albert Castiglia, and Jimmy Vivino. PARXCASINO.COM.



Rufus Wainwright plays two solo piano shows at City Winery in October. [Julien Benhamou](http://JulienBenhamou.com)

Erykah Badu

NOV. 16, HARD ROCK LIVE AT ETESS ARENA

Erykah Badu is mixing the new with the tried and true. She has a new collaborative album with the Alchemist and is coming to Atlantic City in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Mama's Gun, which included "Bag Lady." CASINO.HARDROCK.COM.

Patti Smith

NOV. 29, THE MET

Jaws, *Born to Run*, *Horses*: 2025 is a year of golden anniversaries of seminal works of art. High on the list is Smith's debut album, with its iconic B&W Robert Mapplethorpe photo album cover and choice cuts "Gloria," "Redondo Beach," and "Land," which she'll be performing in its entirety. THEMETPHILLY.COM.

Claire Rousay

DEC. 6, SIDE CHAPEL OF FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH

Claire Rousay is a Canadian-born, Texas-based experimental composer who uses field recordings to recreate ambient

soundscapes. Her music is hauntingly beautiful, and she's playing the truly intimate side chapel of the Frank Furness-designed First Unitarian Church. R5PRODUCTIONS.COM.

Ryan Davis & the Roadhouse Band

DEC. 9, JOHNNY BRENDA'S

Ryan Davis is a Kentucky-based, country-leaning storyteller and a rambling, shambling songwriter-seeker who takes his sweet time on *New Threats From the Soul*, making music that recalls indie brethren like Will Oldham and Bill Callahan, with a little Waylon Jennings thrown in. JOHNNYBRENDAS.COM.

Algernon Cadwallader

DEC. 13, UNION TRANSFER

Bucks County band Algernon Cadwallader — often categorized as "Midwest emo" despite hailing from Yardley — has delighted its following by releasing its first album to feature the band's original lineup since their 2008 album *Some Kind Of Cadwallader*. UTPHILLY.COM.

VISUAL ART



Philly-born artist Man Ray's "Indestructible Object" has gone through several incarnations since its original creation in 1923. Courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art

Surrealism at 100

PHILLY IS THE ONLY U.S. CITY THAT WILL HOST THE DREAMWORLD EXHIBIT, COMING TO THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART.

By Rosa Cartagena
RCARTAGENA@INQUIRER.COM

When does a metronome become a work of art? When you add a paper cutout of an eye to its pendulum bar.

That's what Philadelphia-born artist Man Ray decided to do in 1923; transforming an everyday commercial object into a sculpture,

a "ready made piece." It was Ray's close friend, the provocative French artist Marcel Duchamp, who coined the phrase and popularized the medium in the 1910s to criticize the art industry through avant-garde works, like his famous urinal (*Fountain*).

South Philadelphia-born Ray's sculpture was not as flashy or vulgar, but took on a mythic story of its own. Named *Object to Be Destroyed*, the watchful metronome ticked at a steady pace in Ray's Parisian studio (he

moved in 1921) as he painted because, he later explained, "a painter needs an audience." Later, in a bout of creative frustration, Ray could no longer bear the surveillance, so he fulfilled the title's promise and, in his words, "smashed it to pieces."

It wouldn't be the first time Ray's metronome was destroyed. In 1957, art students took the sculpture from a gallery and reportedly shot it with a pistol. Over time, the cycle of creation and destruction became part of a larger point — that the idea of the artwork could never truly be erased. So he renamed it *Indestructible Object*.

A century later, that remains true: Ray's metronome replicas appear in several collections, including in that of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which will display the artwork as part of the forthcoming exhibit, "Dreamworld: Surrealism at 100," opening Nov. 8.

FEATURING EXILED ARTISTS

Philadelphia is the only U.S. city to host the touring show, which began in Brussels, Belgium, last year and has since stopped in Paris, Madrid, and Hamburg, Germany.

More than 60 artists are featured in the sweeping retrospective, including big names like Duchamp, Ray, Dalí, and Picasso, as well as lesser-known artists like Czech painter Toyen and Cuban artist Wifredo Lam. The Philadelphia show has a particular focus on exiled artists who fled Europe during World War II and continued to practice from Mexico, the Caribbean, and New York.

Surrealism was first articulated as an artistic and literary movement in 1924 (hence the centenary) by André Breton, who believed that imagination was essential to one's life and liberation. Surrealist expression melds what's real and what's fantasy. A lobster replaces a telephone to become Dalí's *Aphrodisiac Telephone*. Look closer, and a robe made of fabric looks like branches of small bodies in Dorothea Tanning's *Birthday*.

Long before artificial intelligence took over our timelines with derivative digital slop, Surrealists spent hours crafting artworks of absurdity for a purpose, showcasing their most outlandish thoughts to reveal unexpected truths.



Dorothea Tanning's "Birthday" painting and Salvador Dalí's "Aphrodisiac Telephone" are part of an exhibit on the centennial anniversary of surrealism. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

"Surrealism was not an art movement and not a movement in literature, although we think of it that way. It was a philosophy of life all about revolt against the status quo ... and, at the same time, reimagining the way things might be," said Matthew Affron, Muriel and Philip Berman curator of modern art at PMA. "It wants to make you uncomfortable in a good way, to change your frame of reference, to change your way of seeing the world and yourself, to shock you out of mental reference points."

'NOT EVERYONE AGREED'

While Philadelphia itself was not a key site for the Surrealist movement historically, the Art Museum has become a focal point for Surrealist art collections, due in large part to former director Fiske Kimball, who beat out other museums to secure major acquisitions from Albert E. Gallatin and Louise and Walter Arensberg's collections in the

1950s. It was the Arensbergs' holdings that led to the Art Museum's status today as the repository for the world's largest collection of Duchamp works.

Kimball's efforts were prescient, too.

"Though we think of many of the artists whose works are in the Arensberg collection as museum artists today, in 1950, it was not obvious to everyone that these would be lasting figures ... not everyone agreed that they would be important forever," said Affron.

Duchamp, everyone can agree now, became one of the most influential artists of the 20th century. So when Man Ray met him in 1915 at an artist colony in Ridgefield, N.J. (thanks to Walter Arensberg), it changed the trajectory of his life.

Ray was born in Philadelphia in 1890 with the name Emmanuel Radnitzky, the son of a tailor and a seamstress, both Jewish immigrants from Russia. According to Ray's 1976 obituary in *The Inquirer*, the family lived at

418 Carpenter St. in South Philadelphia until Ray was 7 and then moved to Brooklyn.

After meeting Duchamp, Ray went on to become one of the sole Americans in the burgeoning Surrealist scene in Paris, where he pioneered a cameraless photographic technique called the Rayograph and experimented with film (his 1923 work *Return to Reason* will also be on view).

Some of his most recognized works depicted former lovers and muses. Ray photographed French model Alice Prin, aka Kiki de Montparnasse, in the nude to create *Le Violon d'Ingres* (1924), which set a record in 2022 as the most expensive photograph sold at auction for \$12.4 million.

AN ARTISTIC PROPHET

The metronome, too, became emblematic of another relationship; with renowned photographer Lee Miller. Following their devastating breakup in 1932, the heartbroken artist

put an image of her eye on the pendulum.

That same year, in an art journal, he invited others to make their own, with instructions:

"Cut out the eye from a photograph of one who has been loved but is seen no more. Attach the eye to the pendulum of a metronome and regulate the weight to suit the tempo desired. Keep going to the limit of endurance. With a hammer well-aimed, try to destroy the whole at a single blow."

Despite his international fame, Ray did not receive as much recognition at home. *The Inquirer* obituary called him "an artistic prophet without sufficient honor in his own country."

Soon, audiences in Philadelphia will be able to give him a proper homecoming. No destruction required (or allowed).

"*Dreamworld: Surrealism at 100*" runs Nov. 8 through Feb. 16 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, 215-763-8100 or philamuseum.org.

A New Bride

THE PAINTED BRIDE ART CENTER MOVES INTO A NEW HOME AND LOOKS FOR ITS NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

By Earl Hopkins
EHOPKINS@INQUIRER.COM

Inside a small bridal shop on South Street, the Painted Bride Art Center was founded as a cooperative art gallery in 1969. Today, the Bride has become a formidable pillar of Philadelphia's arts community.

Longtime executive director Laurel Raczka took the reins of the organization in 1999, leading it through a period marked by expansion. But over the past year, she has been quietly spearheading the Bride's biggest transformation to date.

After months of construction, the institution is rolling out programs at its new, two-story project space in East Parkside.

Raczka said the search for a new permanent space began last fall. The organization wanted to move from its temporary space on 52nd and Market Streets, and was eyeing an accessible, neighborhood-centered space that could breed community engagement.

It landed on a two-story rowhouse at 4029 Cambridge St., located within arm's reach of the Philadelphia Zoo and Please Touch Museum.

ALREADY ACTIVE

While considerably smaller than the former Painted Bride building in Old City, which is adorned with the Skin of the Bride mosaic by Isaiah Zagar, Raczka said the new space is just what the organization envisioned.

"We wanted a space that was nice for artists to work, collaborate, and

create. The space fit all of those things," Raczka said.

The Bride began renovating the former carriage house in March, creating 3,200 square feet of open, community-facing infrastructure.

The first floor, equipped with lighting and a sound and video projection system, will be home to poetry readings, film screenings, open mics, and community forums.

The second floor consists of administrative offices and a hardwood dance studio, which Raczka envisions becoming a rehearsal room for local performers.

The Bride's new home opened on Aug. 9 and is already being put to use. It launched an inaugural artist residency during a performance showcase on Aug. 23, and is currently displaying "Receipts: We Have Them," a photography exhibit curated by the Museum of Black Joy.

A LEADERSHIP CHANGE

The new development comes at an interesting time for Raczka. In July, she announced she would be stepping down as executive director after 26 years at the helm.

A national search, led by the Bride's board of directors, is now underway. Raczka will remain as executive director through the end of the year.

"Fifty-six years is a pretty hefty legacy [for the organization]," Raczka said. "We've had a strong role in strengthening the arts community in Philadelphia, so I look forward to that continuing."

While she has no involvement in the hiring process, Raczka is confident the next leader will carry on the same mission and values the Bride has firmly held throughout the decades.

"I feel like I'm leaving the Bride in a really good place," she said. "We have resources, a new home, a strong staff, and a strong board. That's why my decision was to leave. The Bride is good, and set up for a new leader to come in with a new vision."

In her tenure, Raczka has touched the lives of hundreds of artists, communities, and events. Her impact, board chair John Barber said, will be felt long after her official departure.

"As far as arts and culture, she's an icon," Barber said. "And to have the opportunity to speak with her on a weekly basis, and to see her at work, it's been a pleasure."

While saddened by Raczka's departure, Barber said her push for the new project space creates additional pathways for programming and engagement.

To see the community's support has been "gratifying," Barber said, and he and others are looking forward to what the new era of the Bride brings to the arts community.

"When you look at what the Bride always represented, the identity was never built around just a structure. The mission has always been about being an artist-driven organization that's committed to the creative process and the community. The new space is a turning point. And the arts community seems really excited about what we're doing."

Upcoming programs under the revitalized Bride include Philly-raised bassist and composer Anthony Tidd's performance for Satellite Sound on Sept. 27. Tidd's jazz band Quite Sane returns after two decades with a new album.

paintedbride.org.



Executive director Laurel Raczka and board chair John Barber in the Painted Bride's new home at 4029 Cambridge St. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer




Composer and conductor Joe Hisaishi performing with the Philadelphia Orchestra in Marian Anderson Hall on June 26. He returns to the same venue on Nov. 13 and 14. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts

Sounds of Resistance

THIS SEASON'S CLASSICAL MUSIC MOMENTS GIVE AUDIENCES A CHANCE TO KEEP ART ALIVE IN PHILLY.

By Peter Dobrin
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When the #MeToo movement happened, music groups responded by unearthing works of female composers and adding another gender to the podium. After Black Lives Matter, you would have been hard-pressed to attend a classical music concert without encountering the work of Florence Price or another once-ne-

glected Black artist.

Now, nothing less than our liberal democracy is on the line, and classical music's response has been anything but strident in Philadelphia. It takes time for the creative process to percolate, so maybe the spirit of resistance and works of protest are simply gathering force. A few works addressing societal themes are in the pipeline for spring.

But this doesn't mean that there aren't works and artists that, simply by their presence, meet the moment in some way, this

fall. For one thing, the continued inclusion of artists from traditionally marginalized groups on programs suddenly seems like a statement, and no big pullback from recent seasons is apparent.

For another, given the destruction playing out in various quarters — governmental attacks on places of learning, the stripping of federal funding for arts and culture and public media — spending time in the company of creation has become an act of resistance in itself.

All of this leaves the arts patron with real power. Arts and culture groups are financially vulnerable. Every concert is a chance to vote for culture, each donation is a hedge

against the demise of an institution you wish to see flourish.

The programs highlighted here are recommended as a way for navigating the times — for supporting the culture we want, for the great comfort of distraction, for bringing forth important historical perspective, and for the very real need for refueling emotionally.

We need the art, and the art needs us.

Pipe Up!

THROUGH DEC. 31, FORMER JOHN WANAMAKER STORE

The twice-daily organ concerts are gone, along with the perfume counters and department-store chocolates that once populated the former Macy's (née John Wanamaker Store) in Center City. But the space is enjoying a nice long coda as a pop-up performance venue.

This gives us a chance to once again appreciate the Wanamaker Grand Court as a place of great social value. Good vibes proliferate with the kinds of crowds that have gathered to hear music there over the years, and these feelings are a precious commodity.

Programming was still coming together at press time, but is likely to include a recital

by tenor renowned Lawrence Brownlee, a concert featuring emerging composer Nathalie Joachim, a Halloween bash, and a mighty showing by the Wanamaker Grand Court Organ and return of the Wanamaker Light Show. After the holidays, the space is expected to be off limits for potentially two years as the building undergoes major renovations on the way to a new chapter.

OPERAPHILA.ORG/PIPEUP.

Fall fundraiser

OCT. 7, WRTI-FM (90.1) AND WRTI.ORG

How many times have you turned on WRTI and found exactly the piece of music playing that you didn't know you wanted to hear? The station isn't generally a presenter of live music, but it highlights local artists and groups, and is in some ways the glue that holds the classical and jazz communities together.

Now, in the wake of cuts to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, WRTI is facing a substantial operating deficit and is busily fundraising to cover the gap.

"Public broadcasting was created by Congress in 1967 with the belief that it is essential for a healthy democracy to have



Tenor Lawrence Brownlee in Opera Philadelphia's "Otello" in 2022. Brownlee will likely perform at the former John Wanamaker Store as part of "Pipe Up!" Steven Pisano / AP

access to information and content which is freely available to every American and is not beholden to private interests or control," says WRTI general manager William Johnson, "and we will continue to play that role no matter what." WRTI.ORG.

you didn't know you knew. The concerts are offered on a pay-what-you-wish basis.

PHILADELPHIABACHCOLLECTIVE.ORG.

Pianist Imogen Cooper

OCT. 28, PERELMAN THEATER

The Philadelphia Chamber Music Society seems to exist undisturbed by shifting winds and according to its own mysterious set of rules: simply, internationally revered artists and low-priced tickets.

The price of seemingly everything is sky-high these days. Yet here, for a mere \$32, you can experience the mesmerizing English pianist Imogen Cooper in Bach, Beethoven, and Schubert. Why wouldn't you?

215-569-8080, PCMSCONCERTS.ORG.

Pianist Beatrice Rana

NOV. 10, PERELMAN THEATER

One doesn't want to escape for too long these days — it feels somehow a guilty pleasure — but maintaining some escapism is key to sanity, and pianist Beatrice Rana has laid out a journey with this recital program:



Students in the Play On, Philly Symphony Orchestra rehearse after school. Musicians from Play on Philly and the Philadelphia Wind Symphony will play on Dec. 12 at Broad Street Love. Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer

Philadelphia Bach Collective

OCT. 28, ST. MARK'S CHURCH

Wouldn't it be incredible to be walking through Center City and suddenly realizing that you could escape the weary world for an hour with Bach? Members of Philadelphia early music groups Variant 6 and Night Music have that emotional tonic in a new series of free midday Bach cantatas concerts under the moniker Philadelphia Bach Collective.

The Oct. 28 concert features *Actus Tragicus*, BWV 106, a work so intimate and finely detailed, it's like having your own personal altarpiece. Remaining performances are Jan. 20, *Weichet Nur, betrübte Schatten*, BWV 202; March 24, *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan*, BWV 99; and May 5, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, BWV 80.

Who knows — you may hear a tune or two

MUSIC



Pianist Beatrice Rana, seen here at a Warner Classics recording session, will be playing at Perelman Theater on Nov. 10. Courtesy of Warner Classics

selections from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, Debussy's *Études* and Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* (in the Pletnev arrangement); and Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 6 in A Major* (1940), the first of the composer's three "war" sonatas.

"Constantly evolving into new emotional vistas," was one of The Inquirer's descriptions of Rana's 2019 Philadelphia Orchestra debut. That sounds about right, too, in this, her Philadelphia Chamber Music Society recital debut.

215-569-8080, PCMSCONCERTS.ORG.

Joe Hisaishi and the Philadelphia Orchestra

NOV. 13 AND 14, MARIAN ANDERSON HALL

The author of the sound of most of Hayao Miyazaki's films had listeners in tears during his first visit to the Philadelphia Orchestra, in June. It's partly the sweetness of the music itself that moves. But in that time-transport way that music does best, it only takes a second of hearing a tune from Howl's Moving Castle or Castle in the Sky, and you're

suddenly 12 years old again.

This time, Hisaishi leads the orchestra in music from those two films, along with his symphonic work DA-MA-SHI-E and Britten's Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell. 215-893-1999, PHILORCH.ORG.

Galilee Chamber Orchestra; Chamber Orchestra of Europe

NOV. 19, PERELMAN THEATER; DEC. 10, MARIAN ANDERSON HALL

Galilee, led by Saleem Ashkar, bills itself as the first professional orchestra in Israel composed of both Jewish and Arab musicians, an identity that seems only more notable as time goes on (it was founded in 2012). The program includes Nizar Elkhatir's *Nocturnal Whispers* and Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 23* with Bruce Liu — first prize winner of the 2021 Chopin International Piano Competition — as soloist.

The Chamber Orchestra of Europe's

program is entirely Brahms, including the Double Concerto with violinist Veronika Eberle and cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras. On the podium is a name familiar in these parts, Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Bonus: the Galilee's concert is in the snug Perelman, where the audience-to-ensemble proximity makes it a great place to hear an orchestra. 215-893-1999, PHILORCH.ORG.

Play on Philly and Tune Up Philly

DEC. 12, BROAD STREET LOVE AND JAN. 31, TEMPLE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Philadelphia happens to have a healthy arts education infrastructure, including Settlement Music School, but these two after-school music programs are young with room to grow, and are exactly what the city needs in greater quantity.

You can get a taste of each: musicians from Play on Philly and the Philadelphia Wind Symphony Dec. 12 at Broad Street Love (formerly Broad Street Ministries), across from the Kimmel Center; and Tune Up Philly presents its Winter Concert Jan. 31 at the Temple Performing Arts Center.

PLAYONPHILLY.ORG, PYOMUSIC.ORG.

Tenor Matthew Polenzani and pianist Ken Noda

DEC. 16, PERELMAN THEATER

Cultural norms tend to evaporate slowly and stealthily, and there's something brutal and dehumanizing that's seeped into media and the public sphere. Snap back, then, into the sensitive world of Schubert and his poets.

The collection of Schubert songs known as Schwanengesang (Swan Song) forms the centerpiece of a recital that promises to make connections between music and text, worlds interior and exterior, and the universal ecstasies, anxieties, and longing of being human.

215-569-8080, PCMSCONCERTS.ORG.



Tenor Matthew Polenzani, who will be joined by pianist Ken Noda for a recital of Schubert's "Schwanengesang" on Dec. 16 at Perelman Theater. Fay Fox

Philadelphia Orchestra Live in 'Fantasia'

JAN. 2, 3, AND 4, MARIAN ANDERSON HALL

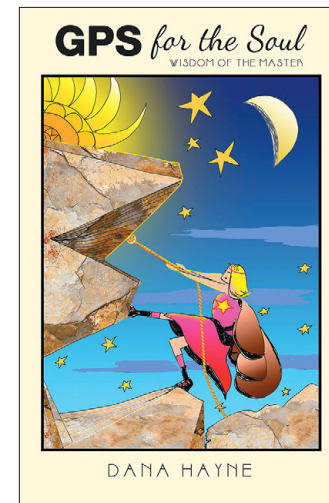
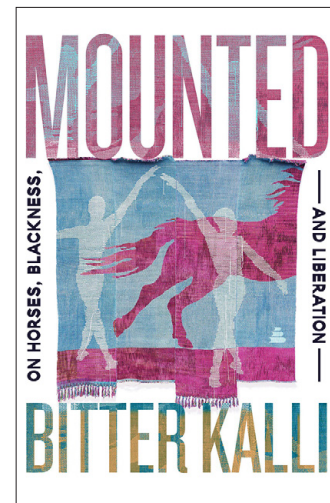
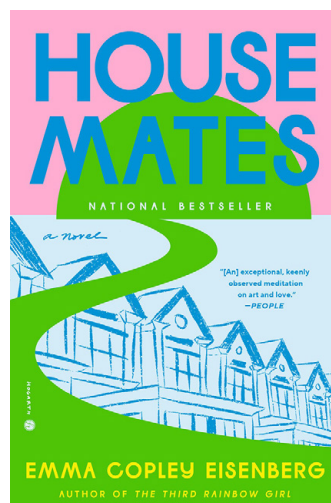
Nothing wrong with pure entertainment in the concert hall. It's in the Philadelphia Orchestra's DNA, after all. Our orchestra led by Leopold Stokowski provided most of the music for *Fantasia* (1940), and here in a specially formatted hybrid, the ensemble plays live-to-screen in clips from that film as well as its sequel, *Fantasia 2000*. Aram Demirjian conducts. 215-893-1999, PHILORCH.ORG.

BalletX and ensemble132

JAN. 8 AND 9, PERELMAN THEATER

Stravinsky's *Petrushka* has captured the imagination of originals no less brilliant than Leopold Stokowski, Frank Zappa, and Basil Twist — and now, Sahun Sam Hong. The pianist and member of musician collective ensemble132 has transcribed the piece for piano and string quartet, which choreographer Amy Hall Garner has set on BalletX.

The fully staged result, commissioned by BalletX and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, receives its debut with these performances. The project models a formula — collaborating across genres, experimenting with the art form and finding new entry points for audiences — that points toward the future. 215-569-8080, PCMSCONCERTS.ORG.



Written by Philly

9 NEW BOOKS FROM LOCAL AUTHORS ARE PURE PAGE-TURNERS TO COZY UP WITH THIS FALL.

By Elizabeth Wellington
EWELLINGTON@INQUIRER.COM

Whether they are new novelists like Harriett's Bookshop owner Jeannine A. Cook, whose debut, *It's Me They Follow*, will be released in a few weeks, or seasoned scribes like Diane McKinney-Whetstone, whose ninth book, *Family Spirit*, hit bookstores in August — Philly authors are thriving, vibing, and, most importantly, writing.

Here are eight titles from local authors for readers to curl up with — or listen to — as the sun sets earlier and the winds blow cooler.

'IT'S ME THEY FOLLOW'

JEANNINE A. COOK, AMISTAD, \$25

Harriett's Bookshop owner, activist, and benefactor Jeannine A. Cook is adding author to her list of accomplishments.

It's Me They Follow is the fictional story of a Philadelphia bookshop owner, who in the midst of opening a bookshop in Fishtown, — sound familiar? — helps people fall in love. The Shopkeeper is looking for love too, but she has a debilitating problem: She passes out when people touch her.

It's Me They Follow is a 240-page quick read that's part fairy tale, part allegory. Get a copy to know if the Shopkeeper gets over her issues and finds true love.

'HOUSEMATES'

EMMA COPLEY EISENBERG, HOGARTH, \$29

2025 Lambda literary finalist Emma Copley Eisenberg's 331-page novel about queer housemates Bernie and Leya's roadtrip through rural Pennsylvania is a tale of self-discovery.

The women's journey along Pennsylvania's winding interstate allows them to chase their artistic dreams and embrace romance.

'FAMILY SPIRIT'

DIANE MCKINNEY-WHETSTONE, AMISTAD, \$27

Diane McKinney-Whetstone's descriptions of West Philadelphia jump off every page in her latest novel, *Family Spirit*. She gets its right down to the description of the air on West 52nd Street "smelling of popcorn and patent leather."

McKinney-Whetstone's use of language pulls readers into the 243-page story about a clairvoyant college sophomore, Ayana, and the plot ensures they don't put the tome down. When Ayana's Aunt Lil, who was cast out of the family for breaking a sacred vow, returns, a chain of page-turning events follows.

'RAVISHING'

ESHANI SURYA, ROXANNE GAY BOOKS, \$28

When Indian American teenager Kashmiria discovers Evolvoir, a magical cosmetic that lets women alter their features as they want, she chooses to look less like the father who

abandoned her. It's as if she's found beauty nirvana.

That is until Kashmiria, along with scores of other women, are hospitalized for ulcerative colitis. Complicating matters, Kashmiria's brother, Nahil, works for Evolvoir. Emerging novelist and Philadelphia resident Eshani Surya — who lives with the pain of ulcerative colitis — weaves a sinister tale about the true cost of beauty.

'GPS FOR THE SOUL: WISDOM OF THE MASTER'

DANA HAYNE, BALBOA PRESS, \$15

Retired Chestnut Hill Hospital labor and delivery nurse Dana Hayne spent 13 years living with Sri Lankan spiritual teacher Bawa Muhaiyaddeen at his Wynnefield mosque. Muhaiyaddeen, according to a 1986 obituary in *The Inquirer*, became famous after he wrote to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, urging the release of American hostages at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran during the Iranian hostage crisis of 1978–1980.

In 2017, Hayne wrote a memoir about the time she spent with him, and that 217-page book will be rereleased this fall. The book highlights lessons Haynes learned about Muhaiyaddeen's teachings on drug addiction, marriage, and death.

'A FAMILY FOR ZOYA: THE TRUE STORY OF AN ENDANGERED CUB'

WRITTEN BY DEBRA KIM WOLF AND ILLUSTRATED BY ANNALISA AND MARINA DURANTE, PLATYPUS MEDIA, \$22

A Family For Zoya: The True Story of an Endangered Cub is a nonfiction children's book about a baby Amur tiger named Zoya who was abandoned by her birth parents in Philadelphia. Zoya was cared for by local zoologists before she was driven to an Oklahoma zoo and adopted by a family of Sumatran tigers — the

COMEDY

first adoption of its kind.

A *Family for Zoya* introduces young readers to wildlife conservation and is available for sale at the Philadelphia Zoo gift shop.

'MOUNTED'

BITTER KALLI, AMISTAD, \$22

Bitter Kalli's collection of essays explores their intimate relationship with horses and how celebrities like Beyoncé and Lil Nas X resurrected equestrian culture in the Black community. Kalli, founder of Philadelphia's Star Apple Farm and Nursery, draws on their personal experiences as a former urban equestrian, and examines the horse as a profound symbol of power and identity in Black life.

They examine how horses, once as ubiquitous on the urban frontier as cars, became elitist and romantic.

'WALKING A TIGHTROPE BACKWARD IN HIGH HEELS'

BLONDELL REYNOLDS-BROWN, WORDEE, \$32

Part political memoir, part leadership guide, former City Councilmember Blondell Reynolds-Brown's memoir, *Walking a Tightrope Backward in High Heels*, is a 282-page account of her 20-plus-year journey of being City Council member at-large while going through a painful divorce.

Reynolds-Brown writes about moving forward after her campaign manager, John McDaniel, was accused of violating campaign finance laws, sullyng her reputation and causing her to pay thousands of dollars in fines.

'BLACK GENIUS: ESSAYS ON AN AMERICAN LEGACY'

TRE JOHNSON, DUTTON, \$30

In *Black Genius*, Philly-based Tre Johnson's nine intertwined essays ooze with the bliss of unapologetically living the Black experience, especially at the trifecta of Black Philadelphia summer events: Odunde, the Roots Picnic, and BlackStar.

Black Genius, according to Johnson, is the corner store, the number hole, the neighborhood bar, grandma's soft pack of Salem cigarettes and her weekly trip to Atlantic City, the everyday business of living as a Black person in America.



John Oliver is bringing his act to the Met in Philly on Dec. 31. Jae C. Hong / AP

Always Funny in Philadelphia

10 CAN'T-MISS COMEDY ACTS COMING TO A STAGE NEAR YOU FROM NOW THROUGH DECEMBER.

By Earl Hopkins

EHOPKINS@INQUIRER.COM

Philly without comedy is like a cheesesteak without Cooper Sharp. It just doesn't have the same flavor. (Sorry, provolone and Wiz lovers, but it's true.)

Just look at hometown heroes like Kevin Hart, Tina Fey, Todd Glass, and the late Bob Saget. The city's comedic brilliance manifests itself in a singular raw and uncut style, and the city audience's love for gritty humor has made it a regular stop for industry talent.

Comics from around the country routinely hit nearby comedy stages, both big and small, and this fall's lineup of appearances is no exception.

Fans can expect laughs courtesy of John Oliver, Hasan Minhaj, Whitney Cummings, and other funny people.

Here's a list of the best stand-up comedy acts coming to Philadelphia this fall.

Anjelah Johnson-Reyes

OCT. 9, RIVERS CASINO

Former NFL cheerleader turned comedic dynamo is performing at Rivers Casino Philadelphia on Oct. 9. Johnson-Reyes is taking the stage as part of her international standup tour, "The Family Reunion."

Fans can bet their chips on a night filled with stories of motherhood and uncontrollable laughs. RIVERSCASINO.COM.

Danae Hays

OCT. 11, PARX CASINO

Since former Alabama softball player Danae Hays has been at the bat in the comedy game, she's been knocking it out of the park. Her blend of parody country songs and Southern comfort style of comedy has led to over 3 million TikTok followers and a national fan base.

Her "redneck" character sketches and hilarious country tunes will be center stage at the Xcite Center at Parx Casino.

PARXCASINO.COM.

Hasan Minhaj and Ronny Chieng

OCT. 15-16, MILLER THEATER

Comedians Hasan Minhaj and Ronny Chieng are headed to Philly for the "Hasan Hates Ronny" tour to prove that mending a wounded nation requires, well, "hatred."

The duo will take the stage at Miller Theater and present the show in the form of a debate, discussing the nation's most urgent political and social issues in a "race to the bottom."

ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.COM.

Josh Wolf

OCT. 24-25, PUNCH LINE PHILLY

For his "The Campfire" tour, comedian Josh Wolf will be bringing the heat for a week-end-long stop at Punch Line Philly.

The witty, guitar-strumming comic and best-selling author will light up the stage from Oct. 24-25.

TICKETMASTER.COM.

Vic DiBitetto

OCT. 25, HELIUM COMEDY CLUB

The viral sensation and self-proclaimed "Working Class Zero" returns to Helium Comedy Club for a night of unfiltered jokes and hilarious tales.

DiBitetto, known for his famous "Bread and Milk" YouTube video, will hit the comedy stage on Oct. 25 for an afternoon show.

PHILADELPHIA.HELIVMCOMEDY.COM.

Louis C.K.

NOV. 5-7, ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Even with nearly a dozen specials, multiple Emmy Awards, and sexual misconduct allegations, Louis C.K. finds his way back into another stand-up tour.

"Ridiculous" brings him center stage at the Academy of Music for three nights of comedy between Nov. 5-7. ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

Druski

NOV. 14, XFINITY MOBILE ARENA

Arguably the most well-known comedian on social media is bringing his instant virality and physical comedy style to Xfinity Mobile Arena for the "Could Fest Tour."

Joining the larger-than-life comic is fellow social media star Caleb Pressley, artists



Druski goes from social media to IRL in Philly on Nov. 14. Evan Agostini / AP

BigXthaPlug, Young M.A., Soulja Boy, Navv Greene, and other special guests. A night that melds hip-hop and shocking laughs.

TICKETMASTER.COM.

Whitney Cummings

NOV. 22, MILLER THEATER

Inspired by her journey into motherhood, Whitney Cummings returns to the comedy stage for her all-new "Big Baby Tour." The comic, show creator, and podcast host will grace Miller Theater on Nov. 22.

VIP ticket holders can participate in a postshow meet and greet with the comic.

ENSEMBLEARTSPHILLY.ORG.

Matt Rife

NOV. 29, XFINITY MOBILE ARENA

The comedian, TikTok star, and actor isn't just a pretty face. Matt Rife has the comedy chops and crowd work to back up his international acclaim.

And if you're bold enough to test him from the audience, Rife is prepared to strike back with quick-twitch jabs and improvised roasts. The comedian is bringing his "Stay Golden" tour to Xfinity Mobile Arena.

TICKETMASTER.COM.

John Oliver

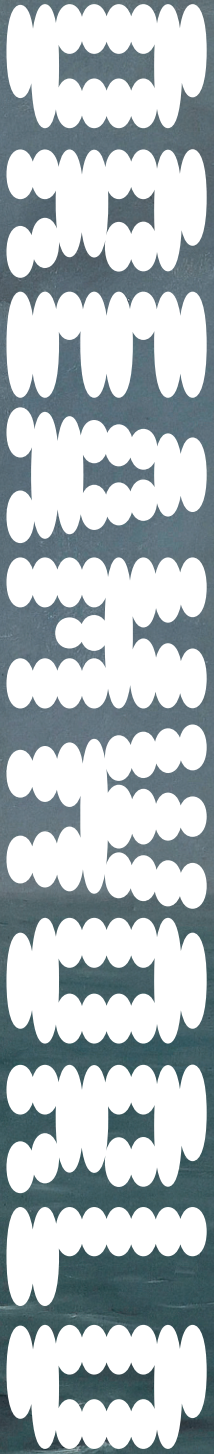
DEC. 31, THE MET

Closing out the year will be Last Week Tonight host and satirical wizard John Oliver.

He will step away from the talk show desk to grace the Met Philadelphia stage on New Year's Eve, as part of his four-city tour, "John Oliver Live." TICKETMASTER.COM.



Hasan Minhaj has a two-night run here with pal Ronny Chieng on Oct. 15 and 16. Brent N. Clarke / AP



**SURREALISM
AT 100**

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