



Walton Arts Center

OnStage

Fall/Winter 2026/27



*Buena Vista
Social Club™*



Good Co



Samara Joy



*Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain
Christmas Carol*

also inside:

- > Recognizing An Outstanding Arts Educator
- > Live Music
- > Meet our *Friends*
- > *Dirty Dancing: The Musical*



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Walton Arts Center

Twilight in Concert



From the President/CEO

Welcome to our 35th Season

There is something extraordinary that happens when the lights dim, the curtain rises and a room full of strangers becomes a community sharing a single moment. Whether it's the laughter that ripples through the theater, the collective gasp at a breathtaking performance or the emotion of a story that stays with you long after the final bow, the arts have a remarkable ability to bring us together.

We invite you to experience that magic again and again.

The first half of our season is filled with unforgettable moments, from the powerful storytelling of *The Notebook* and the groundbreaking energy of *The Outsiders* to the joy, the rhythms and rich musical traditions of *Buena Vista Social Club™* and the celebration of music in *Dirty Dancing: The Musical* and *Jersey Boys*. These Broadway productions are part of a season designed to surprise, move and inspire audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Beyond Broadway, our stages will come alive with incredible artists, musicians, dancers, comedians and family performances that reflect the creativity and diversity of our world. There truly is something for everyone to discover.

While the performances you see on our stages are the heart of what many people know about Walton Arts Center, our mission extends far beyond the spotlight. Every ticket purchased, every subscription and every gift helps us fulfill our purpose as a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching lives through the arts. Through arts education programs, affordable access initiatives, community partnerships and opportunities for people of all ages to experience creativity, we help ensure the arts remain accessible and meaningful throughout Northwest Arkansas.

The impact of Walton Arts Center belongs to all of us — the artists who share their talents, the educators who inspire young minds, the volunteers who give their time, the donors who invest in our future and, most importantly, the patrons who fill our halls with energy and enthusiasm.

Thank you for being part of all that we do. Your presence in our audience is what transforms a performance into a shared experience and our building into a vibrant gathering place for our community.

We are honored to welcome you this season. I hope you discover new favorites, create lasting memories and experience the moments that make you laugh, reflect, connect and say "wow."

See you at the theater.

Warmly,

President and CEO
Walton Arts Center

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President/CEO

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Cover clockwise:
The Broadway
company of BUENA
VISTA SOCIAL CLUB
- Photo by Matthew
Murphy. Cast of
DOLLY PARTON'S
SMOKY MOUNTAIN
CHRISTMAS CAROL
- Photo by Adam
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The Sound of Music



Lyle Lovett and his Small Large Band



Neko Case: *Neon Grey
Midnight Green Tour*



Hadestown



*The Unauthorized Hallmark(ish)
Parody Musical*



STOMP

Welcome to our 35th Anniversary Season!

Procter & Gamble Broadway Series

The Outsiders
Sept. 1-6

Buena Vista Social Club™
Dec. 15-20

The Notebook
Feb. 24-28

The Sound of Music
April 13-18

*Operation Mincemeat:
A New Musical*
May 25-30

Just In Time
July 6-11

Land O'Lakes Concert Series

Trout Fishing in America's
50th Anniversary Tour Kickoff
Sept. 24

The War And Treaty
Oct. 7

Neko Case: *Neon Grey
Midnight Green Tour*
Nov. 2

Lyle Lovett and his Small
Large Band
Nov. 15

Leslie Odom, Jr.
The Christmas Tour 2026
Dec. 1

An Evening with Samara Joy
March 5

John Pizzarelli and Catherine
Russell: *Salute to Ella
Fitzgerald, Joe Pass &
Oscar Peterson*
April 2

Coca-Cola Night Out Series

Choir! Choir! Choir!
presents *Landslide: An EPIC
Fleetwood Mac Singalong!*
Nov. 18

Dolly Parton's *Smoky
Mountain Christmas Carol*
Dec. 8

Twilight in Concert
Jan. 16

Hadestown
Feb. 5-7

Jazz at Lincoln Center
presents *World on a String:
Swinging Songs of Broadway*
April 25

Off-Dickson Series

*The Carpenters Songbook:
A Live Celebration*
Nov. 5

*The Unauthorized
Hallmark(ish) Parody Musical*
Dec. 22

STOMP
Jan. 30-31

An Evening with David Sedaris
April 27



*Operation Mincemeat:
A New Musical*



← Scan here for the
most up-to-date
calendar listing!



Parsons Dance



Cirque Dreams
Holidaze



Cirque Kalabanté:
WOW (World of Words)



Davina & the Vagabonds



Piano Battle



Noah Preminger Quartet



Beetlejuice

Pringles Family Fun Series

Jim Henson's Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock LIVE
Nov. 1

Cirque Dreams Holidaze
Dec. 4-6

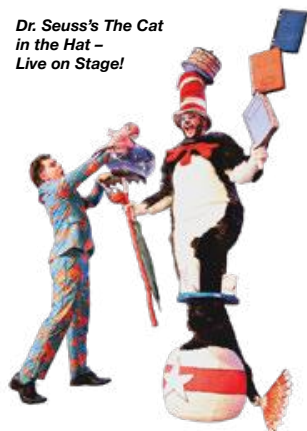
SoNA & WAC present The Snowman: A Family Concert
Dec. 13

Dr. Seuss's The Cat in the Hat – Live on Stage!
March 10

Tall Stories' The Gruffalo
March 11

Tutti Frutti's The Boy Who Cried Wolf
April 1

Dr. Seuss's The Cat in the Hat – Live on Stage!



10x10 Arts Series

Jake Shimabukuro
Sept. 16

Good Co
Oct. 28

Time for Three
Nov. 10

Mariachi Herencia de México: A Mariachi Christmas
Dec. 3

Dover Quartet
Jan. 7

Aquila Theatre's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
Feb. 17

Piano Battle
March 12

Cirque Kalabanté: WOW (World of Words)
March 14

Chanticleer: A Cappella Classics
March 31

Parsons Dance
April 6

West Street Live Presented by Neal Pendergraft

Henhouse Prowlers
Sept. 11

Carlene Carter
Oct. 1

Adam Hood
Nov. 6

The Wooten Brothers
Nov. 19

Davina & the Vagabonds
April 3

Nashville Songwriters
April 24

Starrlight Jazz Club

Matthew Whitaker Trio
Sept. 12

Simon Moullier Trio with Alex Claffy and Steve Pruitt
Oct. 2

Huntertones
Jan. 15

Noah Preminger Quartet
Feb. 20

Edward Simon Trio
April 23

Songbook Salon

From Cole Porter to Bob Dylan featuring Isabella Isherwood
Sept. 10

Flying High: Big Band Canaries Who Soared
featuring the Champion Fulton Trio
March 13

Let's Be Frank: Celebrating the Frank Sinatra Small Group Songbook
featuring Sachal Vasandani & The Christian Tamburr Trio
May 6

More Great Shows!

Bored Teachers: Is It Friday Yet?! Comedy Tour!
Oct. 10

Dirty Dancing: The Musical
Oct. 21-25

Nurse Blake: But Did You Die? Comedy Tour
Nov. 4

Christmas with C.S. Lewis
Nov. 20-22

A Celtic Christmas
Nov. 21

Jersey Boys
Nov. 27-29

Kinky Boots
April 30-May 2

Diamond Awards
May 23

Beetlejuice
June 4-6



Matthew Whitaker
Trio



Walton Arts Center Box Office
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All ticket prices in this publication are all-in standard pricing and subject to change.

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Ryan and Jenna Gill



Tell us about a special memory from attending a show at Walton Arts Center.

Ryan: I've been going to Walton Arts Center since 1995, and a favorite memory is one of the first times I took my son to a show. We saw *STOMP*, and at the time he didn't play drums, but now he plays a big drum kit because he was mesmerized by what he saw at the theater.

Jenna: My first show at Walton Arts Center was Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* in 2010. We had just started dating, and I had never been to a Broadway show. I fell in love with all of it, and it is still hands down one of my favorite shows.

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

Jenna: One of our favorite things is bringing family, clients or friends to the theater for the first time and seeing them fall in love with it and then wanting to share it with others too. Building

community in this way has definitely positively impacted our lives. Also, the education and access programs resonate with me as a former teacher. I know the importance of teaching kids about theater, introducing them to the arts and all of the things they can learn through the education programs that Walton Arts Center provides.

Think back to your first time making a *Friends* gift, what drew you to donate?

Ryan: I've always loved the arts and wanted to start giving back. The donation goes towards expanding opportunities for more people to experience the arts. My mom was a big theater buff and introduced me to the performing arts – a lot of people don't have an opportunity like that. I like knowing that I am paying it forward.

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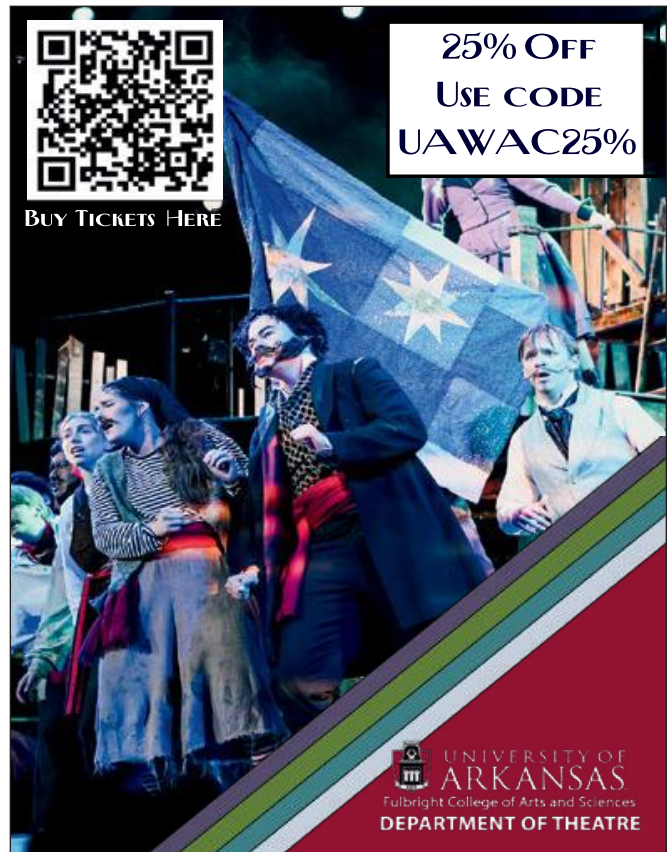
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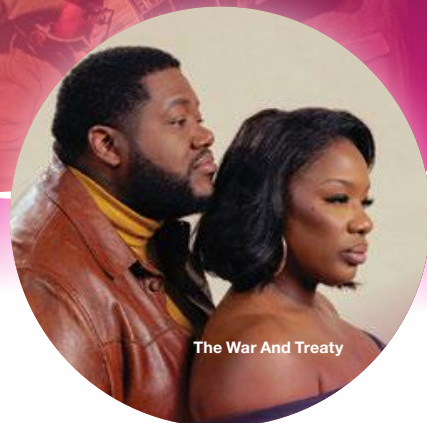


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Live Music Lives Here



Henhouse Prowlers



The War And Treaty

There's no shortage of concerts and live music around here (see walmartamp.com for more). Join us throughout the season to see a variety of artists, from young musicians pioneering fresh sounds to some of the biggest names on tour.

West Street Live

presented by Neal Pendergraft

West Street Live offers six intimate performances featuring renowned musicians and singer-songwriters in an atmosphere reminiscent of neighborhood listening rooms and nightclubs.

Henhouse Prowlers
Friday, Sept. 11

Carlene Carter
Thursday, Oct. 1

Adam Hood
Friday, Nov. 6

The Wooten Brothers
Thursday, Nov. 19

Davina & the Vagabonds
Saturday, April 3

Nashville Songwriters
Saturday, April 24

Starrlight Jazz Club

The accomplished artists in this series are known for lending their skills to award-winning projects and pioneering their unique takes on the jazz genre. Experience the exhilaration of live jazz performed in the intimate ambiance of Starr Theater.

Matthew Whitaker Trio
Saturday, Sept. 12

**Simon Moullier Trio with
Alex Claffy and Steve Pruitt**
Friday, Oct. 2

Huntertones
Friday, Jan. 15

Noah Preminger Quartet
Saturday, Feb. 20

Edward Simon Trio
Friday, April 23



Huntertones

Land O'Lakes Concert Series

Baum Walker Hall provides the perfect stage for bigger bands and music acts that have a devoted, large audience. This series includes a variety of genres and boasts the ultimate listening experience.

**Trout Fishing in America's 50th
Anniversary Tour Kickoff**
Thursday, Sept. 24

The War And Treaty
Wednesday, Oct. 7

**Neko Case: Neon Grey Midnight
Green Tour**
Monday, Nov. 2

**Lyle Lovett and his Small
Large Band**
Sunday, Nov. 15

An Evening with Samara Joy
Friday, Mar. 5

**John Pizzarelli and Catherine
Russell: Salute to Ella Fitzgerald,
Joe Pass & Oscar Peterson**
Friday, April 2



Carlene Carter



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Shows Wrapped in Holiday Cheer

Filled to the brim with festive cheer and theater magic, these shows are the perfect way to welcome in the most wonderful time of the year. Start a new tradition or treat yourself to a night at the theater – either way, you'll leave feeling holly, jolly and ready for the season.



Leslie Odom, Jr.
The Christmas Tour 2026

Leslie Odom, Jr. *The Christmas Tour 2026*

Tuesday, Dec. 1, 7pm /

Tickets start at \$69

With his signature charm, stunning vocals and message of peace, Tony® and Grammy®-winning artist Leslie Odom, Jr. brings the spirit of the season to life in a show that's equal parts soulful, uplifting and unforgettable.

Concert Series Sponsor:

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Mariachi Herencia de México: *A Mariachi Christmas*

Thursday, Dec. 3, 7pm / Tickets \$10

Ring in the season with the heartwarming sounds of Mariachi Herencia de México! Back by popular demand, the Grammy-nominated band performs both Mexican and American holiday favorites and hosts a colorful celebration of holiday traditions.



Mariachi Herencia de México:
A Mariachi Christmas



*Cirque Dreams
Holidaze*

Cirque Dreams *Holidaze*

4 shows

Dec. 4-6 / Tickets start at \$46

This captivating show combines Broadway-style production and awe-inspiring contemporary circus arts. Guests of all ages will be on the edge of their seats as a cast of holiday characters comes to life, singing beloved seasonal songs and performing gravity-defying stunts.

Show Underwriters:

John & Diana Marshall | Brandon & Sarah Wilson

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Premier Series
Support:

Todd & Melissa Simmons

Dolly Parton's *Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol*

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 7pm /

Tickets start at \$40.25

Set in the 1930s in the Smoky Mountains, this production reimagines Scrooge as the owner of a mining company town, where his greed blinds him to the joys and gifts of the season. Featuring Dickens' classic characters and Parton's one-of-a-kind songwriting, this is a holiday show meant to share with those you love.

Night Out Series Sponsor:



The Unauthorized *Hallmark(ish) Parody Musical*

Tuesday, Dec. 22, 7pm /

Tickets start at \$33.35

Packed with your favorite holiday movie tropes and original pop songs such as "Judge That Cookie" and "It Feels Like Christmas (Because It Is Literally Christmas)," this show offers a hilarious twist on the classic holiday movies you already know and love.

Show Underwriter: *Jason P. Viator*



The Unauthorized Hallmark(ish) Parody Musical

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Hailed as a “jaw-dropping, soul-stirring must see” (*The Washington Post*), the Tony® and Grammy® award-winning *Buena Vista Social Club*™ is a journey through music and memory into the beating heart of Havana. A world-class company brings the story of the iconic album to thrilling life in this tale of big dreams, second chances and music that needs no translation.

Learn more about the creation of this show from book writer Marco Ramirez. This Q&A was written by Ruthie Fierberg, published by *Broadway News* and reprinted with permission.

You were asked to come on as the musical's book writer — but you get to decide what the story is and where it goes. What was your first kernel of an idea?

“I want to make sure we honor the music, whatever we do, and that the songs stayed in Spanish. This is, I think, one of the greatest pieces of art ever made by humankind. I would put it up there with the work of Michelangelo and *The Godfather*. Even in the history of recorded music, I think it really stands out. So the story of how it got made is always really exciting. This record was made at a very pivotal, interesting, tricky time in Cuban history. How can we make this musical to help [audiences] understand [the record] a little further — how the making of it was so special?”

In ordering the songs to tell a story through the music, you're not relying on lyrics — though Spanish speakers have a bonus of understanding them. Is the arc you're creating simply an emotional one?

“When we were presenting a song, it would be presenting a new character, a new location, a new conflict, a new theme, a new depth of an argument. I'm a fluent Spanish speaker and it's my first language, so I [don't] write off the audience who speaks Spanish — they're going to see it in “3D.” But my writing principle was: I know what these songs sound like, the audience who even doesn't speak Spanish might know what they sound like, but my job is to show them what they look like, feel like and where they came from.”

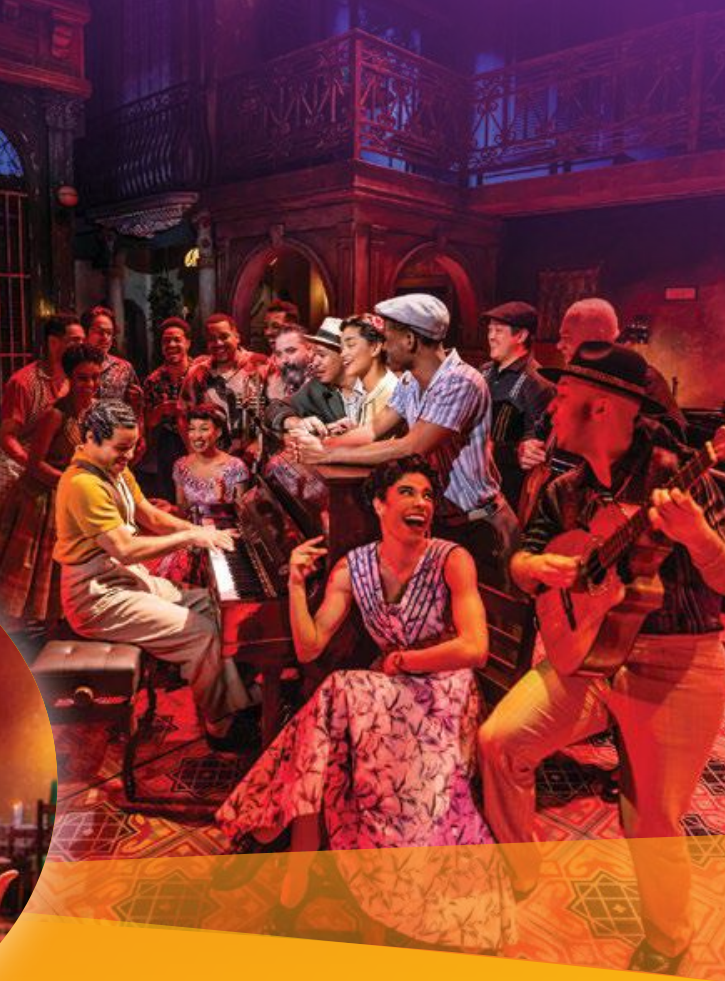
Who are the characters driving the story?

“Even though this is the story of a band [mainly four of its members], as we say at the top of the show, it is framed as a story of Omara Portuondo, who, when we meet her, has not sung in many years for serious reasons. When we meet her, a young producer is saying, ‘I

The Broadway company of
BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB.
Photos by Matthew Murphy.

**“I want to make
sure we honor
the music,
whatever we do...”**

— Marco Ramirez



have an opportunity. I'd love to make one more record.' And much like the gunslinger who has hung up her rifle, she says, 'I don't do that anymore.' But he tempts her with this idea of making beautiful music again, maybe with some people she knows from back in the day.

As she starts singing these songs, memories start coming back – memories of the younger Omara, an artist who wants to make authentic, heartfelt music while her sister wants to make very commercial music. It's ultimately the story of two sisters who used to be close but decide to part ways. That's told parallel to the '90s story of a woman kind of coming back to make music but realizing this is kicking up a lot of old stuff, and it's essentially therapy."

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Staff Spotlight

Nathan Bell

Senior Manager of Patron Services



Describe your role and a typical day at Walton Arts Center/ Walmart AMP.

I oversee our team of house managers, who make sure everything from the tip of the stage to the entry doors is running smoothly, and our volunteer program — over 230 volunteers who generously donate their time to Walton Arts Center. I also work with visiting productions to advance needs for VIP experiences, meet and greets and merchandise settlements. A typical day for me is rarely typical! Patron services intersects with every department in some way, so we play a huge role in the operations and planning for everything that happens here, both this week and things happening two months from now. There is truly never a dull moment, and I have an amazing team that helps make it happen!

What is the most interesting thing about your job?

We have such a diverse group of volunteers from all different backgrounds, and it's always fascinating to hear about their life experiences and travels. As a huge theater nerd, I also love getting a little peek behind the curtain at how the magic happens. The first time I walked backstage, *Cats* was in the house, and seeing those iconic costumes up close was such a surreal experience!

What would you like patrons to know about Walton Arts Center/ Walmart AMP?

Volunteers are truly the heartbeat of what we do here and because of the time that they donate to the organization,

we're able to invest more deeply in mission-driven programming — like our Classroom Series, which offers free or low-cost performances to children from across the region. This enables us to do so much more for our community than we could otherwise. And if you've ever thought about getting involved, it's easier and more fun than you might think! We welcome new volunteers throughout the season, and flexibility is built right in — you create your own schedule and sign up for what works best for you. It's a wonderful way to give back and connect with your community.



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Diamond Awards Finalists Make Their Broadway Debut



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DIAMOND AWARDS



Walton Arts Center's Diamond Awards recognize achievement and excellence in local musical theater and shine the spotlight on Arkansas students. During the 2025/26 school year, 12 high school musical theater productions were adjudicated and nominees from those programs gathered at the second annual Diamond Awards showcase and ceremony. Cali Ferguson from Alma High School and Eli Taylor from Bentonville West High School, the best actress and actor winners, advanced to compete with peers from more than 50 regional awards programs at the Broadway League Foundation's National High School Musical Theatre Awards®, "The Jimmy Awards®" in New York City this past June.

Ferguson and Taylor spent 12 days preparing and rehearsing for the 17th annual Jimmy Awards show, working with industry professionals and making their Broadway debut on the Minskoff stage. Though the bulk of their time was spent rehearsing, they also experienced *MJ* on Broadway and listened to a cast talkback after the show, saw their headshots on a billboard in Times Square, visited The Museum of Broadway and met previous Jimmy Award nominees Fabiola Caraballo Quijada (who you may know as Juliet in the *& Juliet* national tour), Eva Noblezada and Andrew Barth Feldman, among many others.

"This experience helped me grow as a performer ... I learned to come out of my shell and gained a lot more confidence. I am going to carry that into this next year as I prep for college auditions."

– Eli Taylor

Ceremony Underwriter: *Margaret & Dick Rutherford*



Q&A with Arts Educator and 2026 Sparkle Award Winner



The Diamond Awards are about more than just recognizing excellence among high school musical theater students. It's also a chance to shine the spotlight on an outstanding arts educator.

Students nominate teachers for the Sparkle Award, and it is announced at the annual Diamond Awards Ceremony in May. Meet the 2026 Sparkle Award winner, Samantha Burrow.

Why did you want to become a theater educator?

I always had so many questions about what happens after college or after high school. I wanted to use my professional training to educate students of that age – not just about the "acting" or the "technical theater skills," but about life and how their skills will help them in the world. I want students to feel like they can do anything.

What do you say to students who want to pursue a career in the arts?

There are so many jobs that you can use an arts degree for. Theater kids are hard workers and problem solvers who know how to work together with lots of different personalities and how to communicate ideas (large and small). Most importantly, theater kids can connect on a basic human level and that's what we all need the most right now.

What does it mean to you that your students nominated you for the Sparkle Award?

I don't teach for fame and glory. I don't talk about "what's my legacy going to be?" But I believe that kids can't truly learn and be open to learning until they feel comfortable and safe. That's one of my biggest goals as an educator. So for them to feel safe enough to let their guards down and think that I should be recognized was the highlight of my career because that's not why I'm here. I'm here for them, not me.



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The Great American Songbook Reimagined

Flying High: Big Band Canaries Who Soared
featuring the Champion Fulton Trio

The Great American Songbook is an unofficial canon of the most influential 20th-century American popular songs and jazz standards. Spanning roughly the 1920s to 1960s, these enduring tunes were largely written for Broadway, musical theater and Hollywood films, and remain widely performed today. Songbook Salon, Walton Arts Center's newest series, celebrates this music in the glamorous and intimate setting that it deserves. Choose from theater seating at \$43.70 or cabaret seating at \$66.70 in Starr Theater.

Premier Series Support provided *in honor of Mary Ann Greenwood from her family*

From Cole Porter to Bob Dylan featuring Isabella Isherwood

Thursday, Sept. 10 / 7:30pm

Chicago-based pianist, singer and actor Isabella Isherwood is known for her vast and impeccable vocal range. "Thrilling low notes, a middle register that resonates warmth and ghostly obbligatos to enhance an arrangement," says critic Neil Tesser, make for a delightful exploration of the jazz genre and beyond.

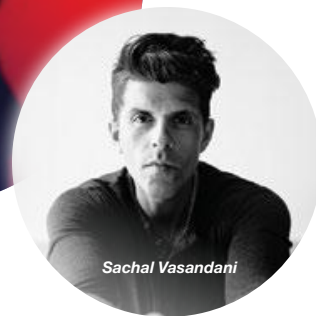
Flying High: Big Band Canaries Who Soared featuring the Champion Fulton Trio

Saturday, March 13 / 7:30pm

Billie Holiday, Anita O'Day, Lena Horne, Peggy Lee, Jo Stafford, Rosemary Clooney and Ella Fitzgerald were "canaries" — women singing with the great Big Bands of the era. Fulton and her trio will celebrate the styles, sounds and music made famous by these jazz canaries once they spread their wings!



Isabella
Isherwood



Sachal Vasandani

Let's Be Frank: Celebrating the Frank Sinatra Small Group Songbook featuring Sachal Vasandani & The Christian Tamburr Trio

Thursday, May 6 / 7:30pm

Thoroughly rooted in jazz, award-winning vocalist Sachal Vasandani has the swagger to front the most swinging big bands and the vulnerability to present definitive classic ballads in a trio. With fresh new arrangements, Vasandani leads us through the rare stylings of Sinatra with a small group.



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Young Professionals Give Back Through Volunteering

Volunteering can fit into any lifestyle, but don't just take our word for it. Talk to Amelia Catanzaro, a young professional who works full time in a corporate job and still volunteers at Walton Arts Center. "Volunteering does not have to be a big-time commitment; you can work three hours or 300 hours and everything in between. That makes it accessible whether you're a working professional, retired or a student. You can work around your schedule and still make an impact."

Catanzaro is just one of several volunteers who carve out time to volunteer in addition to their corporate careers. The company she works for donation-matches her volunteer time, allowing them both to give back to the community.

During a show, volunteers help with a wide range of tasks like scanning tickets and handing out programs, pouring drinks in the *Friends* lounge, helping patrons find their seats and answering questions. For Catanzaro, this variation is what makes volunteering so fun. "It's not like your day job where you know what to expect," she said. "It's different every day because of the shows, the volunteer positions available and all of the different patrons."

"When I graduated college, all those extra arts experiences stopped – I wasn't singing in choir, but I was looking for some way to still be connecting to the arts," she said. As a season



subscriber herself, Catanzaro knows firsthand the joy of live performance, but what drives her most is sharing that feeling with someone experiencing it for the first time. "I am glad I get to be a part of that journey for someone else." Furthering her dedication to the impact of the arts, Catanzaro also donates a gift through the *Friends* program, helping set the stage for free performances for students and teachers through the Classroom Series throughout the year.

The impact of the arts goes beyond just sitting in a chair and seeing a show. "Having a place that makes you feel loved and welcome is amazing," Catanzaro says, "and Walton Arts Center is that place."

"Having a place that makes you feel loved and welcome is amazing, and Walton Arts Center is that place."

– Amelia Catanzaro

**Learn more about volunteering
at 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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Giving Local Visual Artists a Place to Shine

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Now in its second season, Alexander Gallery at Porter Art Warehouse has already become a destination for locals and visitors to the region.

This gathering place for creativity, conversation and community is earning a reputation as a space where regional artists' voices can shine and where everyone can experience something inspiring and new.

The season kicks off with the sixth annual *Our Art, Our Region, Our Time* regional art exhibition. Hundreds of artists submit pieces they have created over the last year for consideration. The exhibition, curated by Kathy P. Thompson and Walton Arts Center's visual arts team, showcases the artists who are working in our region and the wide variety of work that they create. The exhibition is on display through Sunday, Dec. 20.

Visit the Alexander Gallery for free at 212 N. West Ave. Monday through Saturday 11 am – 2 pm or Thursday through Saturday 5 – 8 pm.



Exhibition Schedule

Our Art, Our Region, Our Time

Sept. 25-Dec. 20

Exhibition Underwriter: *Malcolm & Ellen Haygood*

NOW and THEN

Jan. 15-Feb. 28

A unique group show featuring local Native American selections from the University of Arkansas Museum Collections and works by Elise Boulanger, Terése Conway, Russell Cothren and Leon Niehues.

Signature Artist Exhibition: Kevin Kresse

March 12-April 18

Internationally acclaimed artist known for his statues of Arkansas musicians, including a commissioned bust of Johnny Cash for the U.S. Capitol.

Arkansas Pottery Festival

April 29-May 30

Community Creative Center's sixth annual Arkansas Pottery Festival features pottery works by local artists.





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Shows for the Young and Young at Heart



Jim Henson's *Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock LIVE*

Set off on an exhilarating adventure with Jim Henson's fun-loving Fraggles. The first-ever musical based on the beloved, Emmy®-winning Apple TV series, *Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock LIVE*, comes to Walton Arts Center for one performance only Sunday, Nov. 1 at 3pm.

This all-new family-friendly live stage adventure features colorful new walking versions of the Fraggles and exciting original puppet creature friends – all built by the renowned Jim Henson's Creature Shop. With fan-favorite music, laughter and imagination, it's an unforgettable live experience that will have silly creatures ages 3+ dancing in the aisles.

The interactive live musical is brought to life by writer and director John Tartaglia (*Avenue Q*, *Shrek the Musical*, Stephen Schwartz's *The Secret Silk*), who has served as executive producer, writer, puppet captain and performing puppeteer as Gobo Fraggles, Architect Doozer, Gunge, Barry Blueberry and Sprocket the Dog for the Apple TV show. Featuring classic songs, eye-popping immersive stage effects and all the hilarious, heartwarming magic you expect from Jim Henson's creations, *Fraggle Rock* continues to captivate audiences of all generations.

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More Shows for Young Theatergoers

STOMP

Jan. 30-31

3 performances / ages 5+

An eight-member troupe uses matchboxes, wooden poles, brooms and hubcaps to create an electrifying, inventive, witty and utterly unique experience. Come see what all the noise is about!

Show Underwriter: *Wendy Brant*



Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat - Live on Stage!*

Wednesday, March 10 / ages 3+

This timeless tale bursts onto the stage (and maybe the aisles) for an energetic retelling full of laughs, surprises and a bit of delightful disorder.

Show Underwriter: *Richie & Karen Roberts*



Tall Stories' *The Gruffalo*

Thursday, March 11 /

ages 3+

The beloved magical, musical adaptation of the classic picture book returns by popular demand.



Tutti Frutti's *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*

Thursday, April 1 / ages 3+

Inspired by Aesop's famous fable, this much-loved story is brimming with fun, live music, unforgettable songs and delightful characters.





Impact that Resonates

In 2019, Jessica Fisher, theater director at Van Buren High School, brought a group of students to Walton Arts Center to see the Broadway tour of *The Play That Goes Wrong*. Staff arranged for the group to do a stage combat workshop with Michael Thatcher, a member of the Broadway and touring cast of the show.

"It was amazing!" Fisher said. "He used the play and his knowledge to teach my students a skill that they are not exposed to. They were so excited and engaged the entire workshop."

The field trip inspired Fisher as much as it did her students, and in 2025 Van Buren High School produced *The Play That Goes Wrong*. Though these students weren't part of the workshop, Thatcher still reached out to encourage them.

"He was so excited to send the cast a 'Break a Leg' video and gave them some advice on acting," Fisher said. "It was truly impactful to the cast and crew. They felt so heard and seen. They were motivated and thought that it was the coolest thing!"

But what about those students from the 2019 field trip?

"Some of those students are in college now doing theater, and they still talk about that field trip being a key factor in them pursuing theater as a major."

Fisher continues inspiring her students to create great theater by participating in the inaugural Diamond Awards in 2025 and again in 2026. She's also bringing students to Broadway shows through Broadway Bridges on the Road.

"Opportunities like this are so meaningful to my students," Fisher said. "Seeing shows and professional actors giving time to talk to students is amazing."

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Hip-Hop 101 Sparks Confidence and Creativity

Walton Arts Center's Hip-Hop 101 introduced over 1,200 students to the history and basics of hip-hop just last year. This free, afterschool program touches on not only dance and music, but the fashion, visual art, songwriting, production and engineering that make up the most popular genre of American music.

Nine teaching artists — professionals in the industry — delivered over 100 hours of instruction, teaching students to write their own music, record music videos, create costumes and showcase what they learned at a live, on-stage performance.

"The most rewarding thing was helping kids who thought they couldn't rap, dance or draw realize they could," said teaching artist DJ D. Sewell.

In year two of the program, the students became the teachers for Hip-Hop Knowledge Drops — one day, in-school residencies. Students from the ALLPS Crew — one of the first groups who participated in Hip-Hop 101 — joined teaching artists and shared

their knowledge of the fundamentals of hip-hop dance and breaking, visual arts like graffiti and writing and rapping with more than 1,180 third grade students in Northwest Arkansas.

"This program strengthened our school community and helped every child who participated feel like they belonged. Watching students proudly bring their ideas to life was inspiring," shared Jamie Bureis, principal of Asbell Elementary.

Now in its third year, Hip-Hop 101 will expand to Springdale's George Jr. High School, and Hip-Hop Knowledge Drops will extend residencies to over 20 schools in our region, helping local students build confidence and learn about this uniquely American genre.



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Symphony of Northwest Arkansas Launches New Era with Music Director Akiko Fujimoto

A new era is set to begin for the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas (SoNA) with the launch of its 2026-27 MainStage season – the first under newly appointed Music Director **Akiko Fujimoto**.

“We could not be more excited to begin a new era of SoNA with Akiko Fujimoto as our Music Director,” says SoNA Executive Director Ben Harris. “After a long season of searching, we are thrilled to have found a conductor who displays outstanding musicianship on the podium, a deeply thoughtful approach to programming and a remarkable ability to connect with the audience.”

Fujimoto was selected following SoNA’s much-celebrated 2025-26 “Season of Discovery,” which featured six guest conductors, including four finalists for the Music Director position. She first conducted SoNA in January 2026, before being announced as its new artistic leader in May.

“My first season with SoNA is one giant love letter to Northwest Arkansas,” says Fujimoto. “I’ve curated a season of masterpieces that celebrate the artistry of our musicians while reflecting the beauty, imagination and energy of Northwest Arkansas.”

The season begins **Saturday, Oct. 3** with **Rites of Renewal: The Firebird**, Fujimoto’s first concert as SoNA’s Music Director. Inspired by ritual, celebration and transformation, the program includes Berlioz’s *Roman Carnival Overture*, Copland’s spirited *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo* and the exhilarating *Bacchanale* from Saint-Saëns’ *Samson and Delilah*. Stravinsky’s legendary *The Firebird Suite* will bring the evening to a powerful conclusion.

On **Sunday, Nov. 8**, guest conductor **Chelsea Tipton** will take audiences on a cinematic journey with **Modern Mythology: The Music of John Williams**. The Sunday matinee will feature a selection of iconic film and television music by the great living American

composer, from the heart-pounding sounds of *Jaws*, *E.T.* and *Star Wars* to the moving melodies of *Schindler’s List* and *Saving Private Ryan*.

The magic of the holidays returns on **Saturday, Dec. 12** with two performances of **A Very SoNA Christmas**. Guest conductor **Creston Herron** will lead SoNA musicians, the SoNA Singers and special guest soloists in a joyful program filled with holiday favorites. Then on **Sunday, Dec. 13**, presented in partnership with Walton Arts Center, SoNA Assistant Conductor **Sarah Pearson** leads **The Snowman: A Family Concert**, featuring the beloved animated film *The Snowman* with its enchanting orchestral soundtrack performed live.

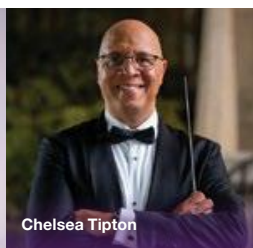
The season continues into the new year on **Sunday, Feb. 21** with **Fate & Triumph: Beethoven’s Fifth**. Opening the program is Carlos Simon’s *Fate Now Conquers*, inspired by Beethoven’s enduring spirit of resilience. Van Cliburn International Piano Competition medalist **Sean Chen** then joins SoNA for Prokofiev’s dazzling *Piano Concerto No. 3*, before Fujimoto and the orchestra culminate the concert with Beethoven’s iconic *Symphony No. 5*.

SoNA closes the season **Saturday, April 10** with **Eternal City: Pines of Rome**, a program inspired by the beauty and grandeur of the natural world. Wagner’s *Forest Murmurs* evokes the mystery of the woodland, while William Grant Still’s *The American Scene: A Mountain, a Memorial, and a Song* paints a vivid musical portrait of the American landscape. SoNA Concertmaster **Winona Fifield** then takes the spotlight in Vaughan Williams’ beloved *The Lark Ascending*, followed by Dobrinka Tabakova’s *Orpheus’ Comet*. And Respighi’s spectacular *Pines of Rome* brings the season to a thrilling close.

Season subscriptions and single tickets are available now, with all performances taking place in Baum Walker Hall. To purchase tickets or subscriptions, visit sonamusic.org or call the Walton Arts Center box office at **(479) 443-5600**.



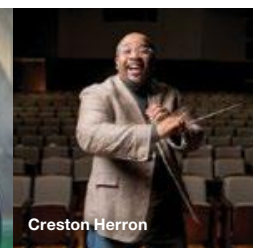
Akiko Fujimoto



Chelsea Tipton



Sarah Pearson



Creston Herron



Sean Chen



Winona Fifield



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Have the Time of Your Life at *Dirty Dancing: The Musical*



A new stage production based on Lionsgate's beloved film *Dirty Dancing* is headed to Walton Arts Center for eight performances Oct. 21-25. Set against the unforgettable summer of 1963, *Dirty Dancing: The Musical* follows Frances "Baby"

Houseman as she discovers love, passion and independence through her relationship with charismatic dance instructor Johnny Castle. With live music from the original film, this is the feel-good escape you've been craving.

Dirty Dancing is an enduring cultural phenomenon that began with the iconic film that grossed over \$200 million at the worldwide box office and went on to launch two multi-Platinum® soundtrack albums, numerous No. 1 hit singles, won an Academy Award® for best original song and a Grammy Award® for best pop performance by a duo or group with vocals. The original film is one of Lionsgate's all-time best-selling library titles. This new North American stage tour aims to honor that legacy while reinventing the live experience for a new era, reconnecting audiences with the heart, heat and rebellious spirit that made *Dirty Dancing* a worldwide sensation.

Dirty Dancing: The Musical is directed by Tony Award® nominee, Obie Award® winner and two-time Emmy Award® winner Lonny



Price (Sunset Boulevard, Sweeney Todd), who played Neil Kellerman in the original *Dirty Dancing* film, with choreography by Darrell Grand Moultrie (Fat Ham, Beyoncé's World Tour). This production aims to capture the pulse, romance and youthful urgency that have defined *Dirty Dancing* for nearly four decades.

Your reservation at Kellerman's awaits!

Premier Broadway Support:

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Show Underwriter:

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Annalese Starzec (Frances "Baby" Houseman), Blake Zelesnikar (Johnny Castle) and the Company of *DIRTY DANCING: THE MUSICAL*. Photos by Matthew Murphy.

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8 SHOWS /

**Oct
21-25**

Todd & Marjorie Hanus



Behind the scenes, more than 30 business leaders serve on Walton Arts Center's Corporate Leadership Council and support fundraising events, like Masquerade Ball, that benefit arts education programs. This support from business leaders in our community is just one of the reasons that Walton Arts Center is able to serve more than 30,000 students and educators annually. We sat down with CLC member **Todd Hanus**, senior vice president of sales at Loacker USA, and his wife **Marjorie** to learn more about their support of the arts.

As a family, you have been *Friends of Walton Arts Center* for 12 years. How did Loacker come to support Walton Arts Center as well?

Todd: Arts and education have always been at the heart of our family. When we moved from the East Coast to Arkansas, supporting the arts felt like the perfect way to connect with our new community, and Walton Arts Center quickly became a natural home. Loacker is an Italian company with more than a century of tradition. Supporting the communities where they live and work is deeply woven into our culture, and Loacker immediately aligned with Walton Arts Center's mission.

What have you learned about Walton Arts Center since becoming *Friends*?

Marjorie: I've been impressed by how the non-profit invests in teachers through its long-standing partnership with the Kennedy Center, offering professional development that helps educators integrate the arts into their classrooms. Seeing how intentionally Walton Arts Center supports students, teachers and schools across Northwest Arkansas has reinforced why supporting the arts here feels so meaningful.

How do you see the arts impacting the community?

Todd: The growth of Walton Arts Center and the Walmart AMP has transformed how Northwest Arkansas experiences the arts. I love hearing friends and colleagues talk about the performances they've seen. The arts spark conversation, connection and joy, and that energy continues to build across our community.

Marjorie: These performances make me laugh, sing along and walk out feeling lighter and more inspired. Supporting the arts means helping ensure that our community continues to have access to those moments of connection, inspiration and pure fun.

What's been your favorite WAC or Walmart AMP show and why?

Marjorie: My favorite Walmart AMP memory is seeing Blake Shelton and Hunter Hayes with our son and daughter on its opening day in June 2014 – being there on day one was electric. It was clear even then that the venue would transform the cultural landscape of Northwest Arkansas.

Todd: Last year's Broadway Series included *MAMMA MIA!* and it truly stood out. It's a joyful story of love, friendship and a wedding told through ABBA's timeless music. With our daughter getting married this year, the show hit especially close to home.

To connect your business with Walton Arts Center, contact Kyle May, senior director of corporate partnerships, at kmay@waltonartscenter.org.





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Symphony of Northwest Arkansas

Akiko Fujimoto, Music Director



2026-27 MainStage Season at Walton Arts Center

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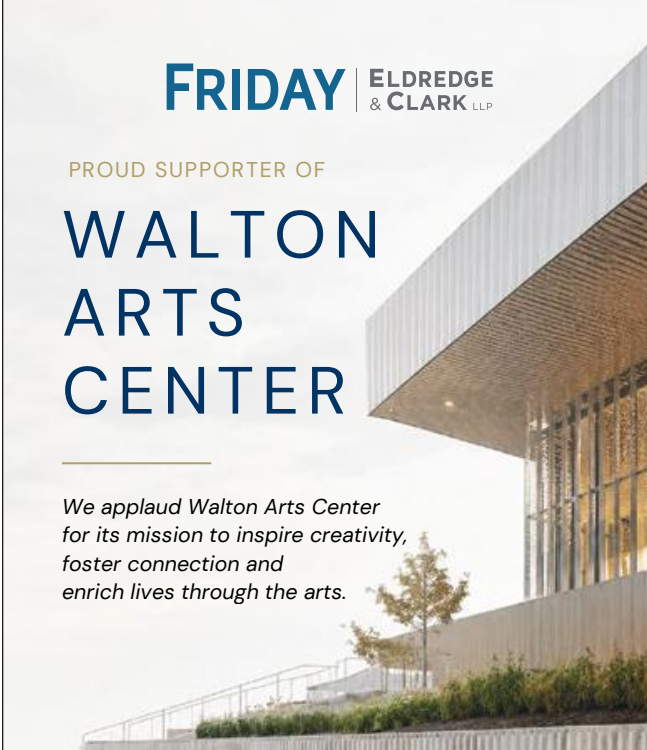
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