

PENN LIVE ARTS ANNOUNCES 24/25 SEASON, BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Penn Live Arts Brings Many Exciting World, U.S., and Philadelphia Premieres to the Stage and Focuses on Amplifying Diverse Artistry

Season includes:

Artist-in-Residence Rennie Harris Puremovement,
Dance, Jazz, Theater, Early Music, World Music, New Music and Cirque Performances



PennLiveArts.org/24-25Season

April 19, 2024 (Philadelphia, PA) — [Penn Live Arts](https://PennLiveArts.org) (PLA) – the leading presenter of innovative and transformative performing arts experiences in Philadelphia – today announces its **2024/25 season**, curated by Executive and Artistic Director **Christopher A. Gruits**. From Korea, England, Belgium, France, Italy, Canada, and beyond, nine artists appear in Philadelphia for the very first time. To this, PLA adds performers from Spain, India, South Africa, and the U.S. to showcase the world's vibrant diversity and interconnectivity. PLA brings these renowned artists and companies to Philadelphia, many new to its stages and offering exciting world, U.S., and local premieres.

In the 2024/25 season, Penn Live Arts seeks to amplify diverse artistry that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. The organization aims to push past barriers, embrace innovation, and forge connections,

using the universal language of music, dance, and theater to enrich people's understanding of the world. Across cultures and continents, PLA celebrates the transformative power of live performance to bring us together, finding joy in shared humanity.

"A world of performing arts comes alive on our stage this season," shares **Christopher A. Gruits, Penn Live Arts Executive and Artistic Director**. "We feature artistry from 10 countries, bringing some of the best artists and companies from around the globe to Philadelphia. We push the boundaries of performance and invite audiences to interact with our artists and the themes shared onstage in meaningful and thought-provoking ways. We hope you'll be moved and inspired by new perspectives, expand your horizons, and join us on this incredible journey."

The season features performances by: the dancer-acrobats of **Pilobolus**; **Joshua Redman**, who returns to the Penn Live Arts stage for the first time in over 10 years with jazz vocalist **Gabrielle Cavassa**; **Complexions Contemporary Ballet**, performing a Philadelphia premiere set to the music of U2; circus company **Flip Fabrique**, also performing a local premiere; a cappella ensemble **Sweet Honey in the Rock**, which celebrates its 50th anniversary; tabla superstar **Zakir Hussain** with santoor player **Rahul Sharma**; vocal group **The Gesualdo Six** (Philadelphia debut); **Abdullah Ibrahim Trio**; singer/songwriter **Ben Folds** (PLA debut); **Limón Dance Company**, performing one of the most significant works from the 1950s; jazz artist **Bria Skonberg** (PLA debut) in a holiday program; the world's only contemporary ice-skating company, **Le Patin Libre** (Philadelphia debut); **Agora de la danse** in the Philadelphia premiere of *Koros – VR Experience*; **Benjamin Bagby** and early music group **Sequentia**; blues singer **Shemekia Copeland** (PLA debut); dance company **RUBBERBAND**, performing a full-length local premiere; jazz guitarist **Rafiq Bhatia** with pianist **Chris Pattishall** (PLA debut); baroque ensemble **Ricercar Consort** (Philadelphia debut) and soprano **Céline Scheen**; blues guitarist and singer **Jontavious Willis** (PLA debut); world music superstar **Angélique Kidjo**; **Kronos Quartet**; renowned circus collective **The 7 Fingers** (PLA debut), performing a local premiere; **Jordi Savall** and early music ensemble **Hespèrion XXI**; singer-songwriter **Patty Griffin** (PLA debut); France's prestigious **Malandain Ballet Biarritz** (Philadelphia debut); urban circus **360 ALLSTARS** (Philadelphia debut) as part of the Philadelphia Children's Festival; saxophonist **Lakecia Benjamin**; and **Parsons Dance**.

Penn Live Arts' **Beyond the Stage** series poses the question, "How can artists help us explore and understand our world?" PLA invites audiences to continue the conversation and dive deeper into the themes and influences of its artists' work. Individuals can find deeper meaning and make connections through small-group discussions, learn something new in workshops, or engage in thought-provoking conversations with the artists, Penn faculty, and area experts. These special opportunities accompany performances by: Bharata Natyam dancer **Mythili Prakash** (PLA debut), who presents a Philadelphia premiere; Gayageum player **Seo Jungmin** in her Philadelphia debut; bassist and singer-songwriter **Mali Obomsawin** in their Philadelphia debut; **Minty Fresh Circus**, a world premiere PLA co-commissioned work; **Negro Ensemble Company**, returning to the Penn Live Arts stage with *Day of Absence*; **Giuliana Musso** in the U.S. premiere of her theatrical work, *DENTRO*; and dance company **Rennie Harris Puremovement** (continuing as Artist-in-Residence this season), performing a world premiere.

Subscriptions, offering savings of over 35%, are on sale now. Single tickets will go on sale in August.

Detailed programming information below.

Event Information

Pilobolus

Friday, September 27, 2024 at 8:00pm

Saturday, September 28, 2024 at 2:00pm

Saturday, September 28, 2024 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Enter a world where imagination knows no limits and boundaries of gravity blur. “Acrobatics are liquefied into poetry” as this “perpetually popular troupe, known for clever contortions and playful antics,” (*The New York Times*) performs re:CREATION, a dynamic collection of works infused with daring experiments and fantastical innovations. As fresh and vibrant as ever, Pilobolus breaks all the rules in the very best way.

Mythili Prakash, *She’s Auspicious* (Philadelphia premiere)

Friday, October 4, 2024 at 8:00pm

Saturday, October 5, 2024 at 2:00pm

Sunday, October 6, 2024 at 3:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Celebrated Bharata Natyam dancer Mythili Prakash leads an all-female cast of performers and musicians in a new, full-length work that challenges femininity and Prakash’s own conflicting identities of woman, mother, and classical Indian dancer. Making her Penn Live Arts debut, “Prakash is a bold and original artistic force. She is of the current generation, churning up work informed by open-minded curiosity and reflection, risk-taking, as well as seasoned artistry—always exuding fierce commitment to her art and culture.” (*Fjord Review*)

The presentation of Mythili Prakash was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Foundation and the Mellon Foundation.

Joshua Redman Group featuring Gabrielle Cavassa, *where are we*

Saturday, October 5, 2024 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

“One of today’s best saxophonists,” (*NPR*) Joshua Redman returns to our stage for the first time in over 10 years to perform the music of his latest album, *where are we*. Created with pandemic-induced wanderlust, this musical journey through America marks his first-ever collaboration with a vocalist, rising star Gabrielle Cavassa, and travels across genre and generation. Mashups of new work and standards including Bruce Springsteen’s “Streets of Philadelphia,” Count Basie’s “Goin’ to Chicago,” Rodgers and Hart’s “Manhattan,” John Coltrane’s “Alabama” and more are interpreted with Redman’s signature improvisational brilliance and melodic invention.

Complexions Contemporary Ballet (Philadelphia premiere)

Friday, October 18, 2024 at 8:00pm

Saturday, October 19, 2024 at 2:00pm

Saturday, October 19, 2024 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Led by Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, “hailed as two of the greatest virtuosos ever to emerge from [Alvin] Ailey” (*The New York Times*), Complexions is known for high-octane movement, an evocative style and a penchant for pushing the boundaries of ballet. This “matchless American dance company” (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*) performs the Philadelphia premiere of *For Crying Out Loud*, set to a soundtrack of acoustic U2 hits. Drawing on the grit and honesty of these stripped-down, iconic songs, the work explores the vulnerability of the human condition in its most conflicted state. Additional works by Rhoden complete the program, each showcasing the technical precision, athletic prowess, and sheer passion of this breathtaking company.

FLIP Fabrique, *SLAM!* (Philadelphia premiere)

Friday, October 25, 2024 at 8:00pm
Saturday, October 26, 2024 at 2:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

A stunning show with a downright smashing title, Canada's FLIP Fabrique returns with *SLAM!*, an electric Philadelphia premiere that amplifies the theatrical and exuberant nature of wrestling, taking inspiration from the sport in its many forms from around the world. Known for "acts that don't seem humanly possible," (*The New York Times*) the acrobats of FLIP Fabrique collaborated with director Robert Lepage and Ex Machina to create a spectacular showcase of strength in which an array of characters test their skills and bring all the drama.

Sweet Honey in the Rock
Sunday, October 27, 2024 at 7:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Beloved a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock returns to our stage in celebration of its milestone 50th anniversary. Internationally renowned for a musical landscape blending gospel, R&B, jazz, and lively ASL interpretation, this powerhouse ensemble is rooted in uplifting African American history and culture. Boasting two of its founding members, one a Philadelphia native, Sweet Honey continually proves it is one of the most dynamic, versatile, and relevant musical collectives today.

Zakir Hussain & Rahul Sharma
Sunday, November 3, 2024 at 7:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Tabla superstar Zakir Hussain is "a fearsome technician but also a whimsical inventor, devoted to exuberant play." (*The New York Times*) The 2023 Percussionist of the Year winner for both the *DownBeat* Critics Poll and Jazz Journalist Association, Hussain mesmerizes audiences with meditative classical ragas, high-energy rhythmic drumming, and masterful improvisational dexterity. Joined by renowned santoor player Rahul Sharma, son of music legend Shivkumar Sharma, the two virtuosos perform a lively showcase of the vibrancy of Indian music.

The Gesualdo Six (Philadelphia debut)
Thursday, November 7, 2024 at 7:30pm
St. Mary's Church | 3916 Locust Walk

Acclaimed for its flawless intonation, "precision and fluency" (*The Guardian*), British vocal ensemble The Gesualdo Six makes its Philadelphia debut in a performance of English Renaissance masterpieces spanning 200 years. Encompassing florid medieval-sounding pieces by Forest and Sheryngham, intricately woven polyphonic works by Tallis and Byrd, and the beautiful simplicity of Gibbons and Tomkins, expect an evening that is "ingeniously programmed and impeccably delivered, with that undefinable excitement that comes from a group of musicians working absolutely as one." (*Gramophone*)

Abdullah Ibrahim Trio
Sunday, November 10, 2024 at 7:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Cape Town-born icon and 2019 NEA Jazz Master Abdullah Ibrahim brings his "spell-binding trio" to our stage on the heels of his latest release, *3*. With over 50 wide-ranging albums, this pianist, composer and outspoken chronicler of South Africa's struggle with apartheid has become an international icon, mixing influences from

jazz and classical to gospel and traditional African music with an “ever-inventive talent.” Stateside performances by Ibrahim are a rare occurrence, and this evening promises an unforgettable experience with a living jazz legend”. (*Jazzwise*)

Ben Folds (Penn Live Arts debut)

Saturday, November 16, 2024 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Ben Folds makes his Penn Live Arts debut. Widely regarded as one of the major music influencers of his generation, singer/songwriter and pianist Ben Folds has created an enormous body of work that spans pop albums with Ben Folds Five, solo releases, compositions for film/TV, and more, with hits including “Brick,” “Rockin’ the Suburbs”, and “The Luckiest.” With his signature charm, stirring melodies, and cleverly brilliant lyrics, Folds makes a rare, one-night-only appearance in Philadelphia.

Limón Dance Company (Philadelphia premieres)

Friday, November 22, 2024 at 8:00pm

Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 2:00pm

Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

A titan of American modern dance, the Limón Dance Company performs *The Traitor*, one of the most significant works of the 1950s that explores betrayal through vibrant movement, lush musicality, and haunting images with performances. This iconic work is paired with two Philadelphia premieres - *Scherzo*, a compelling take on rhythm and movement that hasn’t been performed in decades, and a 2024 creation by Kayla Farrish, a powerful new voice in the dance world. Farrish’s piece will take inspiration from two lost Limón works, *Redes* and *El Grito*, and incorporate her perspective on their themes of community and identity as an artist of color. Pairing classics with contemporary reimaginations, “José Limón’s work will continue to fascinate.” (*The Washington Post*)

Seo Jungmin (Philadelphia debut)

Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 7:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Seo Jungmin is known for pushing the boundaries between traditional and contemporary music with her exceptional skills on the 25-string Gayageum. A member of the renowned Korean music duo, Su:m, and acclaimed internationally for her innovative solo releases, Jungmin makes her Philadelphia debut with *One, My Utopia!*, a mesmerizing sound world of Gayageum, shamanic vocals, and percussion.

Bria Skonberg (Penn Live Arts debut), Jingle Bell Swing

Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 7:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Swing into the holidays with the smoky vocals and fiery trumpet of Bria Skonberg! Described as “one of the most versatile and imposing musicians of her generation” (*The Wall Street Journal*) and “a millennial shaking up the jazz world” (*Vanity Fair*), this rising star makes her Penn Live Arts debut with her hot jazz take on seasonal favorites in *Jingle Bell Swing*, including her hit cover of “All I Want for Christmas is You.” Backed by her quintet, Skonberg’s “beautiful voice—both soul sultry and innocent sweet” (*All About Jazz*) and Louis Armstrong-inspired trumpet talent soar in this jazzy holiday celebration.

Le Patin Libre, *Murmuration* (Philadelphia debut)

Friday, December 13, 2024 at 7:30pm

Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 7:30pm

Penn Ice Rink | 3130 Walnut Street

Le Patin Libre is the world's only contemporary ice-skating company. Hailing from seven different countries and coming to Philadelphia for the very first time, these former championship figure skaters use speed, precision, and intricate moves to reinvent what's possible on the ice. Inspired by the mysterious aerial ballet of bird flocks, *Murmuration* reimagines these complex scientific algorithms into mesmerizing choreography, taking an abstract journey of harmonious, exhilarating, and sometimes dangerous togetherness. "There is magic in Le Patin Libre's shows" and this high-flying new work "will blow your mind." (*The Guardian*)

Agora de la danse, *Koros – VR Experience* (Philadelphia premiere)

Friday, January 24, 2025 at 5:00pm

Friday, January 24, 2025 at 7:00pm

Friday, January 24, 2025 at 9:00pm

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 1:00pm

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 3:00pm

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 5:00pm

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 7:00pm

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 9:00pm

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 1:00pm,

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 3:00pm

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 5:00pm

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 7:00pm

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 9:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Imagine yourself in the middle of the stage, completely immersed within the performance. Dancers move all around you, so close you feel the depth of emotion and see the intricacies of each movement like never before. Made possible with the magic of a virtual reality headset, plunge into the heart of three works specially adapted for this innovative experience: *The Complex Simplicity of Love* by Margie Gillis, *Allegro Barbaro* by Hélène Blackburn, and *6.58 manifesto* by Andrea Peña. A Philadelphia premiere, and a rare opportunity to encounter something of this kind in the United States, *Koros* encourages us to view contemporary dance in a whole new way.

Mali Obomsawin Quartet (Philadelphia debut)

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 7:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Making their Philadelphia debut, Mali Obomsawin is a bassist and singer/songwriter from Odanak First Nation. Infused with American roots, indie rock, and jazz, Obomsawin's internationally acclaimed album, *Sweet Tooth*, was named in the "Best of 2023" list by Grammy.com, *The Guardian*, *NPR*, and *JazzTimes*. Truly on the cutting edge of jazz, Obomsawin seamlessly melds chorale-like spirituals, folk melodies, and post-Albert Ayler free jazz in evocative compositions that serve not only as "potent commentary on indigenous heritage, autonomy and experiences but as gripping, dynamic and thunderous music in and of itself." (*JazzTimes*)

Benjamin Bagby & Sequentia, *Gregorius – The Holy Sinner*

Thursday, January 30, 2025 at 7:30pm

Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral | 19 South 38th Street

Renowned early music artist Benjamin Bagby returns on the heels of his sold-out performance of *Beowulf* back in 2023. Joined by Sequentia, one of the world's most respected and innovative ensembles for medieval music, Bagby brings to life Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius – The Holy Sinner*, an ancient tale of sin, repentance, and redemption. Known for captivating interpretations of music from bygone eras, these incomparable artists "have mastered obscure languages and made them their own in performances that are riveting as well as convincing." (*Boston Musical Intelligencer*)

***Minty Fresh Circus* (World premiere)**
Friday, January 31, 2025 at 8:00pm
Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 2:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Journey through time and space to explore themes of freedom and survival in the early Black American experience. Named in tribute to Harriet Tubman, whose childhood nickname was Minty, this world premiere co-commission is a raucous, playful reimagination of circus and dance that infuses African performance rituals, ceremonies, and cultural traditions. Ultimately, *Minty Fresh Circus* is an Afrofuturistic celebration of the healing power of Black music and movement within a contemporary circus framework.

Penn Live Arts is a co-commissioner of the world premiere of Minty Fresh Circus as part of the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program.

Negro Ensemble Company, *Day of Absence*
Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 7:30pm
Friday, February 7, 2025 at 8:00pm
Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 2:00pm.
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

"Arguably the most successful Black theatre group in the world," (*American Theatre*) the Negro Ensemble Company returns to the Penn Live Arts stage with a new production of Douglas Turner Ward's *Day of Absence*, marking the 60th anniversary of when the group premiered the work off-Broadway. Described as a reverse minstrel show, with Black actors in whiteface, the play tells the story of an average Southern town that awakes to find all its Black residents have disappeared. "Ward's wit is scathing" (*The New York Times*) in this comedic and pointed commentary on systemic racism that still bears relevance today.

The Negro Ensemble Company's performances are made possible in part with support provided by the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program.

Shemekia Copeland (Penn Live Arts debut)
Friday, February 7, 2025, at 8:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Hailed as "the greatest blues singer of her generation" (*The Washington Post*) and "a powerhouse vocalist," (*Rolling Stone*) Shemekia Copeland makes her Penn Live Arts debut, with incomparable vocals, hard-hitting musical truths, and pure star power. This award-winning blues and Americana artist is beloved worldwide for her soulful way of addressing life's trials through her music. "Regardless of subject matter, though, there's no mistaking the majesty of Copeland's instrument, nor the ferocity of her delivery. Copeland reaffirms the relevance of the blues." (*The Chicago Tribune*)

RUBBERBAND, *Reckless Underdog* (Philadelphia premiere)

Friday, February 14, 2025 at 8:00pm
Saturday, February 15, 2025 at 2:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

With an “exciting, seemingly improbable fusion of hip hop, ballet, and modern dance,” (*Los Angeles Times*) RUBBERBAND performs the Philadelphia premiere of *Reckless Underdog*, a dazzling, three-act masterpiece. Ranging in choreographic style, scenography, and music, each part establishes its distinct universe and seeks to boldly overturn the conventions placed upon dance and theatre.

Rafiq Bhatia (Penn Live Arts debut) with Chris Pattishall
Sunday, February 23, 2025 at 7:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

“An intimidatingly strong guitar player,” Rafiq Bhatia is “one of the most intriguing figures in music today.” (*The New York Times*) Making his Penn Live Arts debut alongside pianist Chris Pattishall, Bhatia marries emotional intensity with musical virtuosity in his embrace of jazz, rock, electronica, and Indian influences. Performing the world premiere of a Penn Live Arts commission as well as music from his upcoming 2024 album, “Bhatia is writing his own musical language,” where “sound becomes contour; music becomes something to step into rather than merely follow.” (*The New York Times*)

Ricercar Consort (Philadelphia debut) & Céline Scheen, soprano
Thursday, March 6, 2025 at 7:30pm
Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral | 19 South 38th Street

With “a wonderfully full yet transparent sound” and “expressive detail that [is] wholly absorbing,” (*Gramophone*) Belgium’s Ricercar Consort performs in Philadelphia for the very first time. The ensemble is known for its profound and rigorous exploration of Baroque repertoire in both its significant catalog of recordings and enthralling performances around the world. Joined by the Grammy-nominated soprano Céline Scheen, the program, entitled *The Virgin’s Teares*, features works by Vivaldi, Monteverdi, Purcell, Handel, and more that were inspired by the Virgin Mary and themes of joy, anger, doubt and despair.

Jontavious Willis (Penn Live Arts debut)
Friday, March 7, 2025 at 8:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Called a wunderkind by blues legend Taj Mahal, Grammy-nominated guitarist and singer Jontavious Willis makes his Penn Live Arts debut. Performing music from his forthcoming 2024 album, a testament to his love of songwriting, Willis’ toe-tapping tunes are a synthesis of his Georgia heritage and reverence for blues traditions. “Willis deserves to be celebrated as one of the brilliant new voices” as he is “the real deal, a player and singer who got it all: deep roots feeling, instrumental prowess and a voice that carries the heart and soul of the blues.” (*Living Blues Magazine*)

This performance is co-presented with World Cafe Live.

DENTRO, Giuliana Musso (U.S. premiere)
Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 7:30pm
Friday, March 14, 2025 at 8:00pm
Saturday, March 15, 2025 at 2:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

A mother discovers the worst of truths. A father innocent until proven guilty. Waves of doctors, social workers and other “helpers” who don’t really want to know, furthering the secret’s concealment. In the U.S. premiere of *DENTRO*, Giuliana Musso, one of Italy’s most interesting voices in contemporary theatre, explores the traumatic effects of silence when abuse occurs at home. *DENTRO* is not documentary theatre but an investigation of a current happening; it’s not a work about violence but one exploring the concealment of truth and the lost innocence of children.

Performances of DENTRO are made possible in part with support provided by the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program.

Rennie Harris Puremovement, *American Street Dancer* (world premiere)

Friday, March 14, 2025 at 8:00pm

Saturday, March 15, 2025 at 2:00pm

Saturday, March 15, 2025 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Rennie Harris is PLA’s 24/25 season Brownstein Artist-in-Residence.

Rennie Harris, “the most brilliant hip-hop choreographer in America” (*The New Yorker*) returns with the world premiere of *American Street Dancer*, a work honoring the impact of street dance on the arts world. From the father of street dance, Master Juba, to the influence of this style on tap legends like Savion Glover, hip hop has contributed to theatre, film and culture globally, cementing its place in our history. Backed by a hip-hop orchestra of bucket and hand bone players, beat boxers and DJs, *American Street Dancer* will feature street and tap dancers celebrating styles from across the U.S. – Afro-Cuban salsa (New York), jitting (Detroit), footwork (Chicago) and GQ (Philadelphia).

Rennie Harris in Residence has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. Rennie Harris Puremovement is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Penn Live Arts is the artistic home of Rennie Harris Puremovement. These performances are made possible in part with support provided by the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program.

Angélique Kidjo

Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Angélique Kidjo is a five-time Grammy® award-winner and world music superstar. Blending traditional West African music, jazz, R&B, and funk, Kidjo is a force of nature on stage, using the “earth-shaking power and resonance” (*The Arts Desk*) of her voice to make connections across genres, generations, and geopolitical boundaries. “To be able to witness Angélique Kidjo in her element is a gift,” wrote Alicia Keys on Kidjo’s inclusion in *TIME*’s 100 Most Influential People list. “It doesn’t matter where you are—you hear her, and you become alive. She electrifies people.”

Kronos Quartet

Sunday, March 30, 2025 at 7:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

“The Kronos Quartet has broken the boundaries of what string quartets do.” (*The New York Times*) This renowned new music ensemble, an early Penn Live Arts favorite, celebrates composer and longtime collaborator Terry Riley’s upcoming 90th birthday. Paired with some of the quartet’s newest commissions, the program features several of the 30 works that Riley has written for the group, including *The Gift*, *This Assortment of Atoms – One Time Only!* and *One Earth, One People, One Love*. With thousands of concerts performed worldwide, Kronos Quartet amply demonstrates that it is “the most far-ranging ensemble

geographically, nationally and stylistically the world has known.” (*The Los Angeles Times*)

The 7 Fingers (Penn Live Arts debut), *Duel Reality* (Philadelphia premiere)

Saturday, April 5, 2025 2:00pm

Saturday, April 5, 2025 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

“Every time they take the stage — or soar above it — the 7 Fingers test the limits of possibility.” (*The Boston Globe*) Revered around the world as one of the very best cirque troupes, Canada’s The 7 Fingers makes its Penn Live Arts debut with the Philadelphia premiere of *Duel Reality*, an acrobatic tour-de-force inspired by the star-crossed lovers and feuding families of *Romeo and Juliet*. The sporting arena is where we lay our scene, as conflict becomes competition and the lines between love, honor, and betrayal blur. A smash hit at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, this is an immersive, daredevil showdown where the stakes have never been higher.

Jordi Savall & Hespèrion XXI, *Music of Fire & Love* (Philadelphia premiere)

Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 7:30pm

Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral | 19 South 38th Street

In this Philadelphia premiere, Grammy Award-winning early music interpreter and master of the viola da gamba, Jordi Savall, returns to our stage alongside his legendary ensemble, Hespèrion XXI, for an eclectic program of glosados, variations, and improvisations. With performances that marry meticulous research with virtuosic musicianship, Savall breathes new life into centuries-old compositions, many previously considered lost. For Savall, “music is always more than fleeting sounds. It enfolds histories. It reflects worlds. To draw a distinction between musicology and the sheer joy of performance is next to impossible.” (*The New York Times*)

Patty Griffin (Penn Live Arts Debut)

Sunday, April 27, 2025 at 7:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

One of the most consequential singer-songwriters of her generation, Patty Griffin takes the Penn Live Arts stage for the first time. Over two decades, the Grammy Award-winner has crafted a rich body of Americana, folk, and gospel music that chronicles the deeply personal moments of her life: love and death, heartache and joy, connection and detachment. Always imbued with compassion, uncanny perception, and ever-increasing ingenuity, Griffin’s “songs have independent lives that continue in your head when the music ends.” (*The New York Times*)

This performance is co-presented with World Cafe Live.

Malandain Ballet Biarritz (Philadelphia debut), *The Seasons*

Friday, May 2, 2025 at 8:00pm

Saturday, May 3, 2025 at 2:00pm

Saturday, May 3, 2025 at 8:00pm

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

France’s prestigious Malandain Ballet Biarritz performs in Philadelphia for the very first time in *The Seasons*, a full-length work set to *The Four Seasons*, both Vivaldi’s masterpiece and the lesser-known composition of the same name by Giovanni Antonio Guido. While drastically different, both works are a celebration of nature, and this is eloquently explored in choreographer Thierry Malandain’s masterful fusion of classical and

contemporary styles. “The dance carries everything, from the joy of spring to the passions of summer...just a splendid invitation to meditate on the beauty of life and the passage of time.” (*Le Figaro*)

360 ALLSTARS (Philadelphia debut)
Sunday, May 4, 2025 at 4:30pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Part of the 2025 Philadelphia Children’s Festival

Spinning circles around the competition, 360 ALLSTARS makes its Philadelphia debut with a dream team of world-champion athletes and artists showing off their mad skills in freestyle basketball, BMX, breakdancing, acrobatics, and more. With sold-out runs on Broadway and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, this supercharged urban circus puts the thrill of extreme sports centerstage, backed by a pulse-pumping, live-looped soundtrack. “From basketballs to B-boys to BMXs and unicycles, everything spins at speed in this dizzying show that melds street culture with circus spectacle to make your seat shake.” (*The Guardian*)

Lakecia Benjamin
Friday, May 9, 2025 at 8:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

A rising star with inimitable jazz talent, alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin impressed Philadelphia audiences with her radiant performances in our 2022 Coltrane Festival. “Equally melodic and assertive, her sound feels rooted in tradition, yet broad enough to encompass R&B and Latin music.” (*The New York Times*) Benjamin’s acclaimed 2023 record, *Phoenix*, received three Grammy nominations, further cementing her place as one of the best jazz saxophonists of today. And now, by popular demand, she returns to the Penn Live Arts stage with her dynamic quartet to celebrate a 2025 album release.

Parsons Dance (Philadelphia premieres)
Friday, May 30, 2025 at 8:00pm
Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 2:00pm
Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 8:00pm
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Led by “one of the great movers of modern dance,” Parsons Dance is an audience-favorite, with remarkable athleticism and bold, dance-your-heart-out choreography. Parsons’ signature musicality and wit shine in the Philadelphia premieres of new works, *Balance of Power* and *Mr. Withers*, set to “Ain’t No Sunshine,” “Lean on Me,” “Just the Two of Us” and more hits by singer/songwriter Bill Withers. The program also features Jamar Roberts’ latest piece set to music by jazz legend Miles Davis, as well as company classics *Swing Shift* and *Caught*, a beloved stroboscopic masterpiece. From the opening curtain to the final bows, “Parsons Dance is an enjoyable ride.” (*The New York Times*)

About Penn Live Arts

Penn Live Arts (PLA), headquartered at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, is the leading presenter of innovative and transformative performing arts experiences in Philadelphia. A vital resource for the performing arts at the University of Pennsylvania, PLA is an artistic crossroads joining Penn and the greater Philadelphia region through world-class music, dance, theatre, and film on campus and at venues throughout the city, serving an annual audience of over 80,000. Penn Live Arts emphasizes artistic and intellectual excellence and diversity in its offerings; prioritizes broad inclusiveness in the artists, audiences, and groups it

serves; and expands arts access by actively engaging a wide range of audiences and inclusive communities from campus, the West Philadelphia neighborhood, and the surrounding region. <https://pennlivearts.org/>

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