



NEWS

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Penn Live Arts Announces 2025-26 Season: “America Unfinished”

***Multi-faceted season commemorates our country’s 250th anniversary
through the lens of music, dance, and theatre***

PLA-commissioned world premieres by Artist-in-Residence Rennie Harris, Martha Graham Dance Company in collaboration with PHILADANCO, Tyshawn Sorey, Ephrat Asherie Dance with Arturo O’Farrill, and Delbert Anderson Quartet

Seven artists make Philadelphia debuts: Jorge Luis Pacheco, Aakash Odedra Company, Compagnie Virginie Brunelle, Twelfth Night, Alcoléa & cie, Tiburtina Ensemble, and Delbert Anderson Quartet

***Dance, jazz, new and early music, theatre, world and popular music, and cirque,
plus the Philadelphia Children’s Festival and Student Discovery programs***

(Philadelphia – May 2, 2025) — **Penn Live Arts**, known for its presentation of thought-provoking and transformational performances across multiple genres, announces its **2025-26 season**, curated by **Executive and Artistic Director Christopher A. Gruits**. The season **celebrates America’s 250th birthday** with a robust slate of world and U.S. premieres, newly commissioned works, and a spectrum of new and returning artists who reflect the enormous range of perspectives, cultures and lived experiences that define our country.

“As our nation marks this milestone anniversary, we’ve taken our inspiration for Penn Live Arts’s 2025-26 season from the Declaration of Independence, looking at the aspirational aspects of our democracy through the lens of music, dance, and theatre,” said Gruits. “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—what do these foundational ideals mean in a 21st century context? Experiencing the arts is one of the most profound ways that we as human beings interpret and respond to the world around us. Our season showcases a vibrant tapestry of perspectives, cultures, and lived experiences. From voices that reflect on ongoing struggles to those that envision a future full of promise, we offer a multifaceted view of American life in our ever-evolving democratic experience.”

Subscriptions are on sale now at PennLiveArts.org; single tickets go on sale in early August.

Ten artists from PLA’s 2025-26 season have been invited to specifically respond to the theme of **America Unfinished** in their programs. **Mark Morris Dance Group** opens the season with choreography set to iconic American composers including Samuel Barber and George Gershwin; **New York Stage and Film** partners with

PLA for the first time for **Plays in Progress**; **Ephrat Asherie and Arturo O’Farrill** collaborate on the world premiere of ***Shadow Cities***; the iconic **Dance Theatre of Harlem**, led by Philadelphia native Robert Garland, returns; boundary-pushing bass-baritone **Davóne Tines** joins early music ensemble **Ruckus** for a reimagining of America’s musical history; violinist and MacArthur Fellow **Johnny Gandelsman** debuts a world premiere by **Tyshawn Sorey**, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, MacArthur Fellow and Penn faculty member; **Alarm Will Sound** returns with **Bora Yoon** in *American Stories*, a collection of contemporary works; artist-in-residence **Rennie Harris** completes the third year of his artist residency with the world premiere of *Losing My Religion*; Native American jazz trumpeter **Delbert Anderson** and his quartet blend traditional Diné and contemporary music for the world premiere of *Beyond Belief*, a PLA commission; and **Martha Graham Dance Company** collaborates with dancers from **PHILADANCO!** for the world premiere of *in case of fire, speak*, a commissioned piece by Tommie-Waheed Evans.

Dance

As one of America’s foremost presenters of contemporary dance, Penn Live Arts has forged relationships with the most important and innovative dance companies of our time. The 2025-26 season brings return visits from **Mark Morris Dance Group** with the program *Dances to American Music: Soul of America*, featuring the Philadelphia premieres of *Excursions* and two new works set to music by James P. Johnson and Louis Moreau Gottschalk; **Dance Theatre of Harlem** performing cutting-edge new works and timeless masterpieces; **MOMIX**, with a reprise of their smash hit *Alice*; and, **Ephrat Asherie Dance** and **Latin pianist Arturo O’Farrill** collaborate to create the world premiere of *Shadow Cities*, a PLA co-commission exploring how we are all an amalgam of cultures, identities, and generations.

Also returning, audience favorite **Paul Taylor Dance Company** will perform *Speaking in Tongues* and *Esplanade*, celebrating its 50th anniversary; **Martha Graham Dance Company** performs *Night Journey*, the Philadelphia premiere of *Frontier*, and the world premiere of *in case of fire, speak*, a new commission from Tommie-Waheed Evans featuring guest dancers from **PHILADANCO!**; and **Rennie Harris Puremovement** will perform the world premiere of *Losing My Religion*. Choreographed by PLA Artist-in-Residence **Rennie Harris**, the work is a personal exploration of the world’s constant social, economic and political turmoil through the lens of street dance and hip hop.

Dance companies debuting this year are UK-based Indian dancer and choreographer **Aakash Odedra Company**, whose work is known for its mythological themes and juxtaposition of ancient and modern movement; and the French-Canadian **Compagnie Virginie Brunelle**, lending their intensely physical and cinematic choreography to the U.S. premiere of *Fables*.

Music

From early music to cutting-edge jazz, world music and contemporary fare, the 2025-26 season artists transcend genres to offer an extraordinary range of styles and perspectives.

Returning **jazz** artists include the **Branford Marsalis Quartet**, performing music from their recording *Belonging*, a reimagining of Keith Jarrett’s 1974 album with his European Quartet; an evening with the brilliant and charismatic vocalist **Cécile McLorin Salvant**, a recent MacArthur Fellow; five-time Grammy® Award-winner and NEA Jazz Master **Dianne Reeves** in a special Christmas show; Penn professor of music **Tyshawn Sorey** and his band paying tribute to jazz pioneer Max Roach and his 1968 album, *Members, Don’t Git Weary*; and, an evening with the legendary **Arturo O’Farrill** and his **Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble**.

Some of the hottest jazz artists of the next generation make their Penn Live Arts debuts: Montreux Jazz Piano Solo Competition winner **Jorge Luis Pacheco** (an Arturo O’Farrill protégé); a double bill with “scorching”

trumpeter **Keyon Harrold** who returns to PLA with his sextet and “the heir apparent...to the John Coltrane tradition,” saxophonist **Isaiah Collier** (making his PLA debut) and his quartet (*The New York Times*); and **Delbert Anderson** and his quartet, who mix traditional Native American music with jazz and funk in *Beyond Belief*, a PLA commission.

Three **early music ensembles** make their Philadelphia debuts next season: **Twelfth Night** reimagines Baroque operatic and instrumental works by Handel and Vivaldi; intrepid early music ensemble **Ruckus** and boundary-pushing bass-baritone **Davóne Tines** fuse the Baroque band’s creative spirit with American roots music; and the Czech Republic’s **Tiburtina Ensemble**, an all-female collective of vocalists and a harpist, performs exquisite interpretations of medieval repertoire by Hildegard of Bingen.

Choral music offerings include the three-time Grammy® Award-winning **Soweto Gospel Choir** performing the Philadelphia premiere of *Peace*, an inspiring blend of South African freedom songs and traditional spirituals as well as classics by Aretha Franklin, Peter Gabriel and Leonard Cohen; and **Choir! Choir! Choir!**—an epic, participatory event led by directors Daveed Goldman and Nobu Adilman, who have traveled the world to create harmony and unite strangers through the power of communal music-making.

World music artists present programs encompassing a broad palette of influences and styles: the quartet **DakhaBrakha** returns with its powerful, sonic feast to plumb the depths of Ukrainian roots and contemporary music; Irish fiddler **Martin Hayes** and his quartet put “beguiling new angles” on the lyrical East County Clare style (*The Irish Times*); **Loudon Wainwright III & Chris Smither**, embrace folk, country, jazz, rock, folk and blues in a co-presentation with World Cafe Live; and **Irish Christmas in America** makes its long-anticipated return to Penn Live Arts.

Johnny Gandelsman, a 2024 MacArthur Fellow and Grammy® Award-winning Silkroad Ensemble member, performs a solo violin program featuring the world premiere of a Penn Live Arts commission by Tyshawn Sorey; multiple Grammy® Award-winner and Silkroad Ensemble member **Kayhan Kalhor**, an internationally renowned virtuoso of the kamancheh (Iranian spiked fiddle), makes his PLA debut; **Alarm Will Sound** and multi-instrumentalist and composer **Bora Yoon** perform *American Stories*, a collection of bold, contemporary works exploring themes of heritage, memory, struggle and transformation; and, from ABBA to Tchaikovsky and bluegrass to Broadway, the quirky, fun, and wildly eclectic **Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain** tackles an unexpected menagerie of music with off-beat humor.

Theatre and Film

Penn Live Arts enters a special partnership with **New York Stage and Film**, presenting readings of in-progress, Broadway-bound plays by Colm Summers and C.A. Johnson, featuring talented casts of actors from across film, stage and TV; and, France’s **Alcoléa & cie**, in its Philadelphia debut, brings *Right in the Eye*, celebrating Georges Méliès, a pioneer of the cinema and inventor of special effects, by performing live musical accompaniment to twelve of his originally silent films.

Families and Students

Cirque returns in the 2025-26 season to delight audiences young and young-at-heart. **Cirque Mechanics** performs the Philadelphia premiere of *Tilt!*, a behind-the-scenes adventure at a theme park and **The Peking Acrobats** will leave audiences spellbound with their precision tumbling, juggling, and gymnastics. The **Philadelphia Children’s Festival** returns May 3-5, 2026, featuring family-friendly performances and hands-on activities and more fun in the outdoor PLAYground. Students of all ages will have the opportunity to see Ephrat Asherie Dance, MOMIX, Alcoléa & cie, and Rennie Harris Puremovement through the **Student Discovery** program of school-day matinees.

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 and theatre 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 extensive variety 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.

Visit PennLiveArts.org for more information.

[Click here](#) for 2025-26 season news release.

[Click here](#) for 2025-26 season chronological calendar.

2025-26 Program Calendar

Mark Morris Dance Group

Dances to American Music: Soul of America

Friday, September 26, 7:30 PM

Saturday, September 27, 2 PM

Saturday, September 27, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Penn Live Arts celebrates the rich tapestry of American music and dance with Mark Morris, “the most successful and influential choreographer alive.” (*The New York Times*) Morris’ signature blend of wit, musicality and emotional depth shine in a program featuring iconic American composers, including Samuel Barber and George Gershwin, and the Philadelphia premieres of *Excursions* and two new works set to the jazzy sounds of James P. Johnson and the high-energy rhythmic flair of Louis Moreau Gottschalk. The program also features returning favorites *Dancing Honeymoon* and *Three Preludes*.

Branford Marsalis Quartet

Sunday, September 28, 7 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Saxophonist Branford Marsalis, an NEA Jazz Master and multiple Grammy® Award-winner, returns to the PLA stage alongside his longtime quartet – pianist Joey Calderazzo, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Justin Faulkner. “A model of daring, unapologetic artistry for the past three decades,” (*Jazziz Magazine*) this unparalleled group is revered for its kaleidoscopic range of original compositions and inventive interpretations of jazz classics. On the heels of its first release in six years, the quartet will perform music from its acclaimed new record, *Belonging*, a reimagining of a 1974 album of the same name by Keith Jarrett’s European Quartet.

Plays in Progress

New York Stage and Film

Thursday, October 2, 7 PM

Friday, October 3, 7:30 PM

Saturday, October 4, 2 PM

Sunday, October 5, 3 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

A “formidable breeding ground for new work,” (*The New York Times*) including Tony Award-winners *Hamilton*, *Hadestown*, *The Humans*, *Doubt* and many more, New York Stage and Film is renowned for giving hundreds of artists invaluable opportunities to develop and refine their work. In this special partnership, Philadelphia audiences can experience readings of in-progress plays by Colm Summers and C.A. Johnson, featuring talented casts of actors from across film, stage and TV, and be part of the exciting creative process, seeing new works before they head to Broadway.

Plays:

Falls by Colm Summers (Thursday/Saturday)

Lagniappe by C.A. Johnson (Friday/Sunday)

New York Stage and Film performances are made possible with support from the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program.

Soweto Gospel Choir

Saturday, October 4, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

The “spirited and spectacular” (*The New York Times*) Soweto Gospel Choir is beloved around the world for its irresistibly joyful performances that celebrate the musical heritage of Africa. The three-time Grammy® Award-winning choir performs the Philadelphia premiere of *Peace*, featuring an inspiring blend of South African freedom songs and traditional spirituals, as well as classics by Aretha Franklin, Peter Gabriel and Leonard Cohen.

Jorge Luis Pacheco

Saturday, October 11, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

One of Cuba’s most extraordinary pianists makes his Philadelphia debut. Hailed as “a phenomenon of the piano” by Arturo O’Farrill, Jorge Luis Pacheco is a classically trained virtuoso with a creative mastery of the Afro-Cuban, modern jazz and classical traditions. This rising star and winner of the Montreux Jazz Piano Solo Competition is “a revelation, his hands a virtual blur” in electrifying performances that are “an alternately fiery and ornate display of superior technique.” (*JazzTimes*)

Aakash Odedra Company

Songs of the Bulbul

Saturday, October 18, 2 PM

Saturday, October 18, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

In a highly anticipated Philadelphia debut, international dance star Aakash Odedra performs *Songs of the Bulbul*, a full-length work inspired by the ancient Sufi myth of a bulbul, or nightingale, held in captivity that sings a final, heartbreaking tune before perishing from despair. Winner of the prestigious Best Show of the Edinburgh International Festival, this physically ambitious solo serves as a haunting metaphor for the fleeting nature of dance and life itself and is rooted in the rich traditions of Sufi music, poetry and movement. “A work of exquisite beauty and sadness,” this “is the kind of theatrical moment that stays with you forever.” (*The Scotsman*)

Cécile McLorin Salvant

Sunday, November 2, 7 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

“One of the greatest jazz singers of her generation,” (*Rolling Stone*) multi-Grammy® Award-winner Cécile McLorin Salvant returns to our stage with her velvety vocals and captivating musical storytelling. This recent MacArthur Fellow “possesses not only one of the most original imaginations in modern jazz but also succeeds in reaching emotional depths that few other vocalists reach.” (*Jazzwise*) With vivid theatricality and a rich tapestry of jazz standards and original compositions, a live concert by Cécile McLorin Salvant is quite simply a must-see.

Twelfth Night

Trouble in Paradise

Thursday, November 6, 7 PM

St. Mary's Church | 3916 Locust Walk

Early music ensemble Twelfth Night, in its Philadelphia debut, reimagines operatic and instrumental masterpieces from the Baroque era. Directed by violinist Rachell Ellen Wong and harpsichordist David Belkovski, this dynamic ensemble of young stars is joined by singers Nicoletta Berry and Megan Moore for Handel's pastoral romp *Aminta e Fillide*, evoking a lush world of unrequited love and longing. The evening also includes Vivaldi's electric sinfonia from *Il Giustino*, an opera characterized by its lively rhythms, ornate harmonies and dramatic contrasts.

Choir! Choir! Choir!

Hallelujah: An Epic Anthems Sing-Along

Saturday, November 8, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Why see a show when you can *be* the show? Choir! Choir! Choir! directors Daveed Goldman and Nobu Adilman have traveled the world to create harmony and unite strangers through the power of communal music-making. This fully interactive, participatory event turns the audience into the performers as you sing your way through the greatest songs of all time, from Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell to Whitney Houston and Shania Twain. No experience necessary – all voices are welcome. Get ready to sing your heart out!

Ephrat Asherie Dance with Arturo O'Farrill

Shadow Cities

Friday, November 14, 7:30 PM

Saturday, November 15, 2 PM

Saturday, November 15, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Reflect on the beauty, vastness and joy of the in-between in the world premiere of *Shadow Cities*, featuring the street and club dance choreography of Ephrat Asherie and original music composed and performed by Grammy® Award-winning jazz pianist Arturo O'Farrill. This Penn Live Arts co-commission explores how we are all an amalgam of cultures, identities and generations, fixed and infinitely fluid, fully embodied and fragmented all at once. With Asherie's exhilarating remix of dance styles and O'Farrill's signature Latin jazz grooves, *Shadow Cities* explores what it means to be in-between and how this vivid place is where we often feel most alive.

Penn Live Arts is a co-commissioner of the world premiere of *Shadow Cities* as part of the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program.

DakhaBrakha

Sunday, November 16, 7 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Met with an exuberant crowd and thunderous applause as part of PLA's Ukraine series in 2024, Kyiv's DakhaBrakha returns with its powerful, sonic feast and visual spectacle. The quartet's "ethno-chaos" sound plumbs the depths of Ukrainian roots and contemporary rhythms, fusing ancient folk melodies with everything from indie rock and pop to hip hop and the avant-garde. Intimate then riotous, this soulful tapestry of the unexpected creates "live shows that take DakhaBrakha beyond mere curiosity to utter brilliance." (NPR)

Martin Hayes Quartet

Saturday, November 22, 7:30 PM

Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral | 19 South 38th Street

"One of the best fiddlers on the planet," (NPR), Martin Hayes was last seen on the PLA stage 10 years ago as part of his supergroup, The Gloaming. His soulful interpretations of traditional Irish music are rooted in the slow, lyrical East County Clare fiddling style. Joined by his quartet, Hayes has "an insatiable appetite for adventure," putting "beguiling new angles on the tradition," further cementing his place as one of the most influential talents of the Irish music scene. (*The Irish Times*)

Dianne Reeves***Christmas Time is Here***

Sunday, December 7, 7 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Jazz diva Dianne Reeves brings the Christmas spirit, melding her timeless grace, spellbinding vocals and radiant charisma into an unforgettable evening of holiday favorites including "Let It Snow," "Carol of the Bells," "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and more. Ring in the season with this five-time Grammy® Award-winner and NEA Jazz Master, "a vocal stylist of extraordinary skill and vivacity." (*The Huffington Post*)

MOMIX***Alice***

Friday, December 12, 7:30 PM

Saturday, December 13, 2 PM

Saturday, December 13, 7:30 PM

Sunday, December 14, 3 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Go down the rabbit hole with MOMIX! A smash hit with PLA audiences back in 2022, *Alice* uses vivid imagery, imaginative costumes and awe-inspiring movement to create a fantastical Wonderland complete with the Mad Hatter, Queen of Hearts, White Rabbit and more favorites. "A marvelously dizzying flow of physical activities and illusions amid expansive, artful projections" (*The Wall Street Journal*)

Irish Christmas in America

Friday, December 19, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Make merry this holiday season with Ireland's finest traditional artists. Returning to PLA's stage for the first time since 2017, this special 20th anniversary performance of Irish Christmas in America will feature vocal star Caitríona Sherlock in her Philadelphia debut as well as the local talent of McAleer-Paulson School of Irish Dance. "Full of exceptional music and dance, relaxed good humor, and interesting historical commentary," (*Irish Echo*)

Dance Theatre of Harlem

Friday, January 16, 7:30 PM

Saturday, January 17, 2 PM

Saturday, January 17, 7:30 PM

Sunday, January 18, 2 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Praised by *The Washington Post* as "a premier ballet company and global ambassador for excellence," Dance Theatre of Harlem is a dynamic force in the dance world. Led by Philadelphia native Robert Garland, this iconic company returns to the PLA stage bringing unprecedented relevance to classical ballet with cutting-edge new works and timeless masterpieces performed by some of the most exceptionally trained dancers around.

Alcoléa & cie
Right in the Eye

Friday, January 23, 7:30 PM
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Live music blends with classic film in this movie-concert by France's Alcoléa & cie. A Philadelphia debut, *Right in the Eye* celebrates Georges Méliès, a pioneer of the cinema and inventor of special effects, by adding an original, multi-layered score to complement and interpret 12 of his otherwise silent films. A trio of musicians play an extraordinary range of 50 instruments, from the classics to the obscure, evoking the technical wizardry and playful creativity that defined Méliès' work. This unique production puts music and film in perfect harmony to reimagine cinema's early years.

Isaiah Collier & Keyon Harrold

Saturday, January 24, 7:30 PM
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Hailed as the "future of the trumpet" by *DownBeat*, Keyon Harrold's warm, expressive sound blends jazz, Afrobeat, rock, blues and hip-hop. With collaborators ranging from Beyoncé and Common to Gregory Porter and Robert Glasper, this "scorching trumpeter" and his sextet are joined for a special double bill with saxophonist and jazz prodigy Isaiah Collier. In 2024, Collier was a *Chicago Tribune* Jazz Artist of the Year, named to *DownBeat's* "25 for the Future" and included in *The New York Times'* top 10 jazz albums of the year. The "heir apparent to...the post-Coltrane sax tradition," Collier makes his Penn Live Arts debut alongside his quartet in this unforgettable evening of jazz. (*The New York Times*)

Ruckus with Davóne Tines
What is Your Hand in This?

Thursday, January 29, 7 PM
Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral | 19 South 38th Street

Intrepid early music ensemble Ruckus and boundary-pushing singer Davóne Tines deliver the bite of America's earliest revolutionary music, time-traveling through four centuries of reimagined songs, hymns and dance tunes. "The world's only period instrument rock band," (*San Francisco Chronicle*) Ruckus is known for its visceral approach, fusing a Baroque band's questing, creative spirit with the grit, groove and jangle of American roots music. A Penn Live Arts debut with bass-baritone Tines, a "singer of immense power and fervor," (*Los Angeles Times*) this concert ponders the fragile American experiment, asking how we stand up against wrongdoing while still coming together as a country.

Loudon Wainwright III & Chris Smither

Sunday, February 1, 7 PM
Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

A Penn Live Arts debut of two music icons. They first met in the late 1960s amidst the folk revival, and since then, Loudon Wainwright III and Chris Smither have each made an indelible mark on the contemporary singer-songwriter scene. With influences from folk, country, jazz and rock, Wainwright's music is rich, candid and witty, as he "wrings more human truth out of his contradiction than any other songwriter of his generation." Smither's folk and blues sound is layered over the ever-present backbeat of his tapping feet, taking "the blues in a direction entirely his own: stoic existential ruminations sung in a pained, weathered moan and set to quietly virtuosic guitar." (*The New York Times*)

This performance is co-presented with World Cafe Live.

Tyshawn Sorey

Members, Don't Git Weary

Friday, February 6, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Tyshawn Sorey, MacArthur Fellow, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and professor of music at Penn, pays tribute to jazz pioneer Max Roach and his 1968 album, *Members, Don't Git Weary*, a recording with context embedded in one of the most pivotal cultural periods of the 20th century. For this Philadelphia premiere, Sorey's new arrangements wink at the originals, but also capture the current moment in our cyclical history. Sorey, on drums, will be joined by Adam O'Farrill (trumpet), Mark Shim (tenor saxophone), Lex Korten (piano) and Tyrone Allen (bass) for this heartfelt snapshot of Roach's music.

Cirque Mechanics

Tilt!

Saturday, February 14, 2 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Soar to new heights in the Philadelphia premiere of *Tilt!*, a behind-the-scenes adventure amidst the roller coaster, Ferris wheel and more favorites at the theme park. Known for "intelligently conceived and expertly executed" (*The New York Times*) creations, Cirque Mechanics' new show offers breathtaking acrobatics, high-flying excitement and zany antics by the cast of characters who keep the rides running and the thrills coming.

Johnny Gandelsman

This is America

Saturday, February 14, 7:30 PM | Christ Church | 20 North American Street

Sunday, February 15, 3 PM | Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

"A violinist who can do anything," (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*) Johnny Gandelsman's *This is America* is an ever-growing collection of commissioned works by U.S. composers that reflect on society's rupture and disconnection. "Rich in diversity but united by interpretative beauty and belief," (*Gramophone*) the works honor our country's vibrant cultural tapestry and its myriad perspectives. Gandelsman, a 2024 MacArthur Fellow and Grammy® Award-winning member of the Silkroad Ensemble, will perform a solo violin program featuring the world premiere of a Penn Live Arts commission by Tyshawn Sorey, a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, multi-instrumentalist and professor of music at Penn.

The program for each performance varies but both include the world premiere work by Tyshawn Sorey.

Compagnie Virginie Brunelle

Fables

Friday, February 20, 7:30 PM

Saturday, February 21, 2 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Known for raw, intensely physical and cinematic choreography, Compagnie Virginie Brunelle performs in Philadelphia for the first time with the U.S. premiere of *Fables*. This full-length work for 10 dancers and a pianist offers a poetic yet sometimes harsh vision of women's ongoing struggle. Against the backdrop of a world in chaos, a series of evocative tableaux show female archetypes becoming larger than life in their grandeur, strength and resilience as they pave the way through invisible, yet very real barriers.

Kayhan Kalhor

Sunday, March 8, 7 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Kayhan Kalhor, an internationally renowned virtuoso of the kamancheh (Iranian spiked fiddle), brings his masterful artistry to Penn Live Arts in this highly anticipated debut performance. A multiple Grammy® Award-winner and member of the illustrious Silkroad Ensemble, Kalhor takes centuries-old Persian traditions to new worlds with bold, emotive improvisations. Don't miss this rare Philadelphia appearance by a true music luminary.

Alarm Will Sound with Bora Yoon
American Stories

Friday, March 13, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

"One of the most vital and original ensembles on the American music scene," (*The New York Times*) Alarm Will Sound performs *American Stories*, a collection of bold, contemporary works that reflect the vast, evolving landscape of our country's identity. Celebrating 25 years of dynamic virtuosity, the ensemble, joined by composer and interdisciplinary artist Bora Yoon, explores themes of heritage, memory, struggle and transformation, embracing how America is an unfinished story, constantly being rewritten.

The Peking Acrobats

Sunday, March 15, 3 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

The Peking Acrobats push the limits of human ability, wowing audiences with spellbinding trick-cycling, precision tumbling, juggling, somersaulting and gymnastics. With a three-decade legacy of elite talent, this world-record-setting troupe takes ancient Chinese traditions to new heights, pairing artful athleticism with live music and festive pageantry. Bring the whole family – these masters of agility and grace are, quite literally, defying gravity.

Rennie Harris Puremovement

Losing My Religion

Friday, March 20, 7:30 PM

Saturday, March 21, 2 PM

Saturday, March 21, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Rennie Harris, "the most brilliant hip-hop choreographer in America" (*The New Yorker*) and our 25/26 season artist-in-residence, returns with the world premiere of *Losing My Religion*, an exploration of the world's constant social, economic and political turmoil through the lens of street dance and hip hop. Set to a chilling soundscape, this new work features projections of Harris' own visual artwork and takes inspiration from his renowned autobiographical solo, *Endangered Species*. *Losing My Religion* offers a haunting narrative of personal and systemic struggle and transformation, a multifaceted reminder of our humanity.

Major support for Rennie Harris in Residence has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from 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.

Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain

Saturday, April 11, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain returns to the PLA stage to celebrate four decades (and 400,000,000 plucks). From ABBA to ZZ Top, Tchaikovsky to Nirvana, bluegrass to Broadway, these singing and strumming uke superstars tackle an unexpected menagerie of music with off-beat humor and four-stringed virtuosity. Quirky, fun and shockingly eclectic, these rock-star strummers promise an "oversized dose of unexpected hipness." (*The New York Times*)

Paul Taylor Dance Company

Friday, April 17, 7:30 PM

Saturday, April 18, 2 PM

Saturday, April 18, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Paul Taylor Dance Company is “one of the most exciting, innovative, and delightful dance companies in the entire world.” (*The New York Times*) This audience-favorite returns with *Speaking in Tongues*, a dramatic work which had its world premiere on the PLA stage in 1988. Set against a melodic yet haunting score, the piece examines the undercurrent of fanaticism and hypocrisy in religion. A stark contrast, the program will also feature the definitive Taylor work *Esplanade*, which is at once playful, somber and romantic. Set to Bach, this masterwork celebrates its 50th anniversary with “stunning athleticism and irrepressible lyricism.” (CBS News)

Tiburtina Ensemble

Celestial Harmony: Music for the Heavenly Court by Hildegard of Bingen

Thursday, April 23, 7 PM

Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral | 19 South 38th Street

The Czech Republic’s Tiburtina Ensemble performs exquisite interpretations of medieval repertoire with an all-female collective of vocalists and a harpist. The ensemble comes to Philadelphia for the first time with Celestial Harmony, a program of glorious music by Hildegard of Bingen, an influential musician, theologian and healer, and one of few prominent women of the time. Hailed for “creating a musical experience that was as enchanting, as it was engrossing,” (New York Classical Review) Tiburtina Ensemble explores the visionary legacy of a true Renaissance woman.

Delbert Anderson Quartet

Sunday, April 26, 7 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

Delbert Anderson, a Diné jazz trumpeter and composer, makes his much-anticipated Philadelphia debut. “At the forefront of a vibrant Native American jazz scene,” (*The New York Times*) Anderson and his innovative quartet blend traditional Diné spinning songs with jazz and funk in a program featuring the world premiere commissioned work *Beyond Belief*, a multi-part meditation on Navajo history and the tribe’s broken relationship with America.

Philadelphia Children’s Festival

Sunday, May 3–Tuesday, May 6, 2026

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

The annual Philadelphia Children's Festival features an exciting array of professional performances for the whole family as well as hands-on activities and more in the outdoor PLAYground.

Arturo O’Farrill

Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble

Friday, May 8, 7:30 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

“One of our greatest living pianists,” (*DownBeat*) Arturo O’Farrill returns to the PLA stage with his extraordinary Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble. Known for impeccable ensemble playing and showstopping soloists, these multi-Grammy® Award-winning musicians perform works from across the Latin jazz canon as well as O’Farrill’s own compositions. Don’t miss this Latin jazz visionary and members of “one of the best jazz orchestras in existence.” (*The New Yorker*)

Martha Graham Dance Company

Friday, May 29, 7:30 PM

Saturday, May 30, 2 PM

Saturday, May 30, 7 PM

Annenberg Center | 3680 Walnut Street

"One of the great companies of the world," (*The New York Times*) the iconic Martha Graham Dance Company celebrates a century of Graham's groundbreaking and uniquely American dance style. Beloved worldwide, the troupe performs *Night Journey*, offering a different perspective on the Greek myth of Oedipus, and the Philadelphia premieres of *Frontier*, a tribute to the vision and independence of the pioneer woman, and a special new work in honor of America's 250th anniversary. The program will also feature the world premiere of *in case of fire, speak*, a commissioned piece by Tommie-Waheed Evans, for which the company will be joined by dancers from PHILADANCO!

Tommie-Waheed Evans' *in case of fire, speak* is a co-commission of Penn Live Arts and ArtPhilly as part of the What Now: 2026 Festival. These performances are made possible with support from the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program.

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