

PENN LIVE ARTS

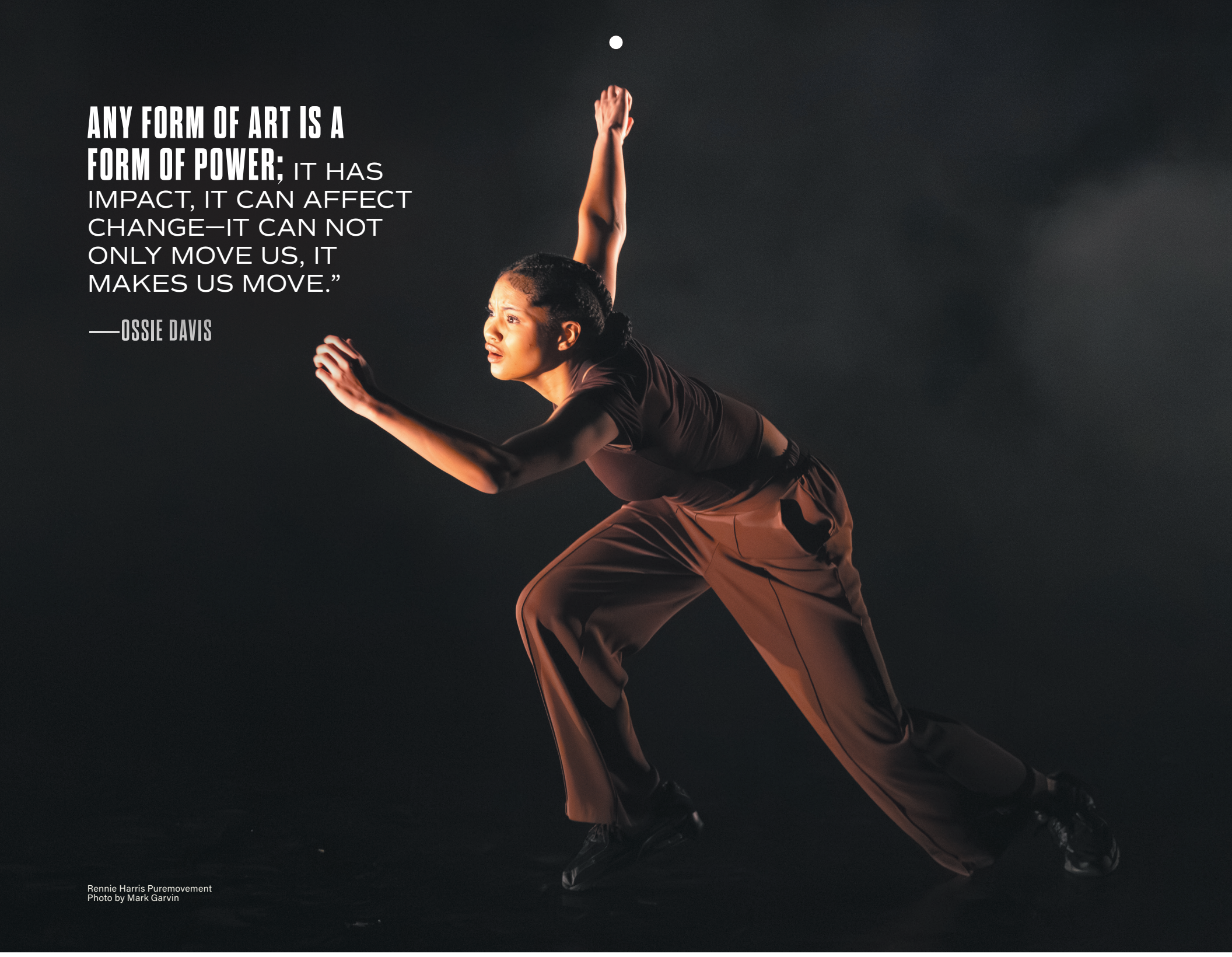
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

25★26 IMPACT REPORT

# AMERICA UNFINISHED

**ANY FORM OF ART IS A FORM OF POWER;** IT HAS IMPACT, IT CAN AFFECT CHANGE—IT CAN NOT ONLY MOVE US, IT MAKES US MOVE."

—OSSIE DAVIS



Rennie Harris Puremovement
Photo by Mark Garvin

## DEAR FRIENDS OF PENN LIVE ARTS,

The 2025–26 season offered so many reminders of why the performing arts matter: they challenge us to see the world differently, bring us into conversation with experiences beyond our own, and create spaces where we can imagine what comes next. Through *America Unfinished*, we explored the many voices, histories, and identities that continue to shape our nation, presenting artists whose work invited us to consider both where we have come from and where we are going.

At the heart of the season was our commitment to artistic creation. We presented 19 Philadelphia premieres, eight Philadelphia debuts, eight Penn Live Arts debuts, and four Penn Live Arts commissioned world premieres, including *Losing My Religion*, the culmination of a three-year residency with Philadelphia's own Rennie Harris and Rennie Harris Puremovement. We were especially proud to see *American Street Dancer*, our earlier commission with Harris, travel to New York's Joyce Theater, where it received both popular and critical acclaim. These are the kinds of artistic journeys that make long-term partnerships with artists so meaningful.

Throughout the season, we also created opportunities to experience the work more deeply—from master classes and open rehearsals to conversations with artists, classroom collaborations, and programs for thousands of students and young people. Through our Arts & Entertainment Career Connections program, we also helped Penn students gain paid, hands-on experience with arts and entertainment organizations, connecting their education with the professional world. These encounters remind us that a performance does not end when the curtain falls; it can spark curiosity, connection, and new ideas that continue long afterward.

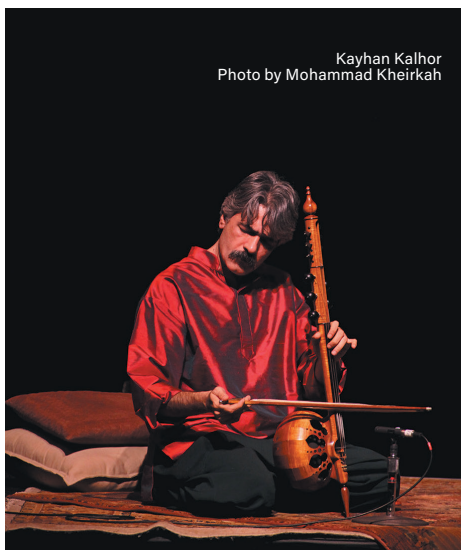
As we look ahead, PLA is entering an exciting new chapter and a truly transformational moment for the performing arts at Penn. The opening of the Platt Student Performing Arts Center in 2027, the addition of Irvine Auditorium to our portfolio of venues, and continued progress toward the Stuart Weitzman Theatre will significantly expand our capacity to serve artists, students, audiences, and our broader Philadelphia community—creating new opportunities for performance, artistic development, and connection across Penn and beyond.

I am deeply grateful to you—our donors, subscribers, audiences, students, artists, and partners—for making this work possible and for sharing in the remarkable journey ahead.



In Gratitude,

Christopher A. Gruits
*Executive & Artistic Director*
*Penn Live Arts*



Kayhan Kalhor
Photo by Mohammad Kheirkah



Martha Graham Dance Company
Photo by Mark Garvin



Martha Graham Dance Company
Photo by Mark Garvin

# SEPTEMBER 2026

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7<br>**LABOR DAY** | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25<br>**ALONZO KING LINES BALLET**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 26<br>**ALONZO KING LINES BALLET**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM, 7:30 PM |
| 27<br>**AN EVENING WITH JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## AMERICA UNFINISHED

Reflecting on the nationwide commemoration of America's 250th anniversary—which began in Philadelphia—our 2025–26 season, *America Unfinished*, looked beyond celebration to ask how the American story continues to evolve. Across nine performances, the series explored the nation's many voices, histories, and identities, including four Penn Live Arts co-commissions and world premieres.

Choreographer **Ephrat Asherie** and Grammy Award-winning composer **Arturo O'Farrill's** *Shadow Cities* celebrated the cultural intersections of New York City, blending street and social dance with Afro-Latin jazz to explore migration, community, and shared traditions. Violinist **Johnny Gandelsman** premiered *Capriccio for Violin Alone* by Tyshawn Sorey, a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and professor of music at Penn. In *Losing My Religion*, **Rennie Harris Puremovement** examined faith, identity, and the search for meaning through Harris's groundbreaking fusion of hip-hop and theatrical storytelling. The season also featured *in case of fire, speak*, a landmark collaboration between the **Martha Graham Dance Company** and **PHILADANCO!** choreographed by **Tommie-Waheed Evans**. Inspired by Martha Graham's 1938 work *American Document* and its enduring question, "What is an American?", the piece brought together dancers from both companies to explore identity, history, and the many voices that shape the American experience.

Together, these commissions embodied our commitment to investing in new artistic voices and ensuring that *America Unfinished* was not only a reflection on our nation's past, but a contribution to its living cultural future.



New York Stage & Film
Lower photos by Mark Garvin

# OCTOBER 2026

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2<br>**MICHAEL MAYO**<br>Prince Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8<br>***UNRAVELLED***<br>Prince Theatre<br>7 PM | 9<br>***UNRAVELLED***<br>Prince Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 10<br>***UNRAVELLED***<br>Prince Theatre<br>2 PM |
| 11<br>***UNRAVELLED***<br>Prince Theatre<br>2 PM | 12<br>**INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY** | 13 | 14 | 15<br>**TM KRISHNA**<br>Prince Theatre<br>7 PM | 16 | 17<br>**GRAVITY & OTHER MYTHS**<br>Prince Theatre<br>2 PM |
| 18<br>**ANTS ON A LOG & MÉLISSA SMITH**<br>Feintuch Family Lobby<br>10 AM | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23<br>**PENN FAMILY WEEKEND**<br>**BALLETS JAZZ MONTRÉAL**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 24<br>**PENN FAMILY WEEKEND**<br>**BALLETS JAZZ MONTRÉAL**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM, 7:30 PM |
| 25<br>**PENN FAMILY WEEKEND** | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30<br>**ARUN RAMAMURTHY TRIO & RUDRESH MAHANTHAPPA HERO TRIO**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 31 |

## CLASSROOM COLLABORATIONS

**Our *America Unfinished* theme provided a range of rich and complex topics that augmented Penn courses and started conversations between artists, students, and faculty.** Broadway's Michael Wilson, who directed New York Stage and Film's reading of Colm Summers' new play *Falls*, about a son watching his father experience the progression of Parkinson's disease, visited with **The Literature of Care**, a seminar course cross-listed in English and Penn's Medical Humanities Program.

With a class of mostly health science and bioethics majors, Wilson discussed the choices artists make to represent the complexity of illness and care onstage, and fielded questions about the responsibility of actors and directors to true lived experiences. Playwright Summers also visited with Rose Malague's **Theatre in Philadelphia** class.

In the weeks leading up to Rennie Harris Puremovement's premiere of *Losing My Religion*, Harris visited Margit Edwards's first-year seminar, **Theatre as Storytelling: Black Theatre and Performance Practice**, to share his experiences of the early hip-hop movement and his journey as a choreographer. Edwards and GSE Professor Catherine Box also led dinnertime discussions for Penn First Plus students ahead of Rennie Harris and Ephrat Asherie's shows, respectively.

While many connections with students are limited to a single event, this season also offered the opportunity to collaborate longer term: the **School of Engineering's Integrated Product Design** director Sarah Rottenberg facilitated a connection with her design students that resulted in a season-long consultation around physical and sensory accessibility at the Annenberg Center. Students in the program worked with the Events and Guest Services and Education teams to develop recommendations for enhanced signage, wayfinding, and communications changes that would benefit all patrons regardless of mobility and sensory needs.



Ephrat Asherie Dance
Photo by Mark Garvin

# NOVEMBER 2026

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1<br>**ARTS OF INDIA FESTIVAL COMMUNITY DAY**<br>Annenberg Center<br>1 PM<br>**NILADRI KUMAAR**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6<br>**NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 7<br>**NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>3 PM |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13<br>**PENN HOMECOMING** | 14<br>**PENN HOMECOMING**<br>**BÉLA FLECK**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM |
| 15<br>**PENN HOMECOMING**<br>***HANDEL AT HOME***<br>Powel House<br>3 PM, 7 PM | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20<br>**COMPAGNIE HERVÉ KOUBI**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 21<br>**COMPAGNIE HERVÉ KOUBI**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM |
| 22<br>**HOT PEAS 'N BUTTER**<br>Prince Theatre<br>3 PM<br>**LOUIS CATO**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26<br>**THANKSGIVING** | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## ACCELERATOR PROGRAM ARTISTS
## EPHRAT ASHERIE & ARTURO O'FARRIL

During the 2025–26 season, we welcomed back two longtime artistic collaborators—**choreographer Ephrat Asherie and Grammy Award-winning composer and pianist Arturo O'Farrill**—for the world premiere of their Penn Live Arts co-commission, *Shadow Cities*. Having previously presented the work of both artists individually, we were proud to support this new collaboration, bringing together Asherie's dynamic street and club dance vocabulary with O'Farrill's vibrant Afro-Latin jazz compositions. Part of the *America Unfinished* season, *Shadow Cities* explored the intersections of culture, migration, identity, and community through the powerful exchange of music and movement.

**The engagement extended beyond the stage** through opportunities for audiences and students to connect directly with the artists and ideas behind the work. Ephrat Asherie led a **dance masterclass** exploring the foundations and cultural history of house dance, while **INSIGHTS events** invited audiences into conversations about collaboration, creativity, and artistic process. In November, we welcomed **Penn First Plus** students for a pre-show dinner and conversation with Dr. Catherine Box from the Graduate School of Education. Centered on dance and multiculturalism, the discussion encouraged students to reflect on their own relationships to dance and cultural identity while exploring themes of language, belonging, and community.









Photos by Eddie Morenco







# DECEMBER 2026

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6<br>**ISAIAH J. THOMPSON**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11<br>***A VERY SW!NG OUT HOLIDAY***<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 12<br>***A VERY SW!NG OUT HOLIDAY***<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM, 7:30 PM |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18<br>**CHOIR! CHOIR! CHOIR!**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25<br>**CHRISTMAS DAY** | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1<br>NEW YEAR'S DAY | 2 |

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

This past season, we continued our commitment to student performing arts, supporting **more than 50 student-run productions across three venues over 28 weeks** of the academic year. We also supported showcase events that connected students with one another and brought families, alumni, and friends together to celebrate Penn's vibrant performing arts community.

**Student Performing Arts Night** (SPAN) brought together more than 50 student performing arts groups and hundreds of students for an energetic showcase of short performances. Organized and produced by the student-led Performing Arts Council (PAC) Executive Board, with support from Platt Student Performing Arts House, SPAN introduces students—especially first-year and transfer students—to the breadth of performing arts opportunities at Penn before the fall audition season.

**Family Performing Arts Night** (FPAN) gave nine student groups the opportunity to share their work with family and friends during Penn's Family Weekend, offering loved ones a glimpse into the creative communities their students are part of on campus.

In December, we extended that community beyond campus with the return of ***A Toast to Dear Old Penn*, a student performing arts showcase at Carnegie Hall.** Eight student ensembles took the stage before an audience of students, alumni, parents, and friends. A pre-show reception hosted by the Penn Performing Arts Regional Council of New York provided an opportunity to connect and celebrate the students' accomplishments.

**Together, these programs create opportunities for students to grow as artists and leaders, build community, and share their talents with audiences at Penn and beyond.**




Architectural Rendering of the Platt Student Performing Arts Center
Courtesy of Steven Holl Architects



Architectural Rendering of Stuart Weitzman Theatre
Courtesy of Höweler + Yoon Architects

# JANUARY 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1<br>**NEW YEAR'S DAY** | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23<br>**CIRQUE ÉLOIZE**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM |
| 24<br>**DELBERT ANDERSON QUARTET**<br>Prince Theatre<br>7 PM | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29<br>**DAYMÉ AROCENA**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

## PENN LIVE ARTS ACROSS CAMPUS

We continue to lead artistic programming and steward Penn's performing arts venues while expanding our role across the University's growing portfolio of performance and rehearsal spaces. Alongside managing the three theatres at the Annenberg Center and the Iron Gate Theatre in the historic Tabernacle United Church, in FY27 we will also assume operational management of Irvine Auditorium, further expanding our capacity to support performing arts activity across campus.

**At the heart of this growth is the new Platt Student Performing Arts Center, named through a transformative gift from Julie Beren Platt and Marc Platt**. Scheduled to open early 2027, this 38,700-square-foot venue will provide dedicated performance, rehearsal, teaching, and practice spaces for Penn's student performing arts community. Facilities include: the 326-seat Edward W. Kane Theatre, named through a generous gift from Ed Kane and Marty Wallace; the flexible 125-seat Sally Katz & Class of 1982 Theatre, named by a gift from Sally Katz; five rehearsal studios; a student lounge; and spaces designed to foster collaboration and community.

Simultaneously, plans for the **Stuart Weitzman Theatre** continue to advance. With design development and University approvals complete, construction is anticipated to begin in summer 2027, with an opening planned for winter 2029.

Together, these investments and expanded operations **will transform PLA's footprint to an eight-theatre network of performance and rehearsal spaces across campus.** This expanded capacity will create more opportunities for students and audiences, enable us to provide greater support for artists developing and incubating new work, and strengthen PLA and Penn's role as a home for the performing arts and a catalyst for the region's creative ecosystem.



Rennie Harris Puremovement
Photo by Mark Garvin

# FEBRUARY 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5<br>**BRANFORD MARSALIS & DIANNE REEVES**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 6 |
| 7<br>**THIRD COAST PERCUSSION & GLENN KOTCHE**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11<br>**DALLAHAN**<br>Prince Theatre<br>7 PM | 12<br>**MARTIN HAYES DUO**<br>Prince Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 13<br>**OPEN SESSION WITH BÉLA FLECK & MARTIN HAYES**<br>Prince Theatre 11 AM<br>**TALL STORIES THEATRE COMPANY**<br>Zellerbach Theatre 2 PM<br>**NORA BROWN WITH STEPHANIE COLEMAN**<br>Prince Theatre 7:30 PM |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19<br>**BLACK GRACE**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 20<br>**BLACK GRACE**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM, 7:30 PM |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25<br>**I FAGIOLINI**<br>Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral<br>7 PM | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

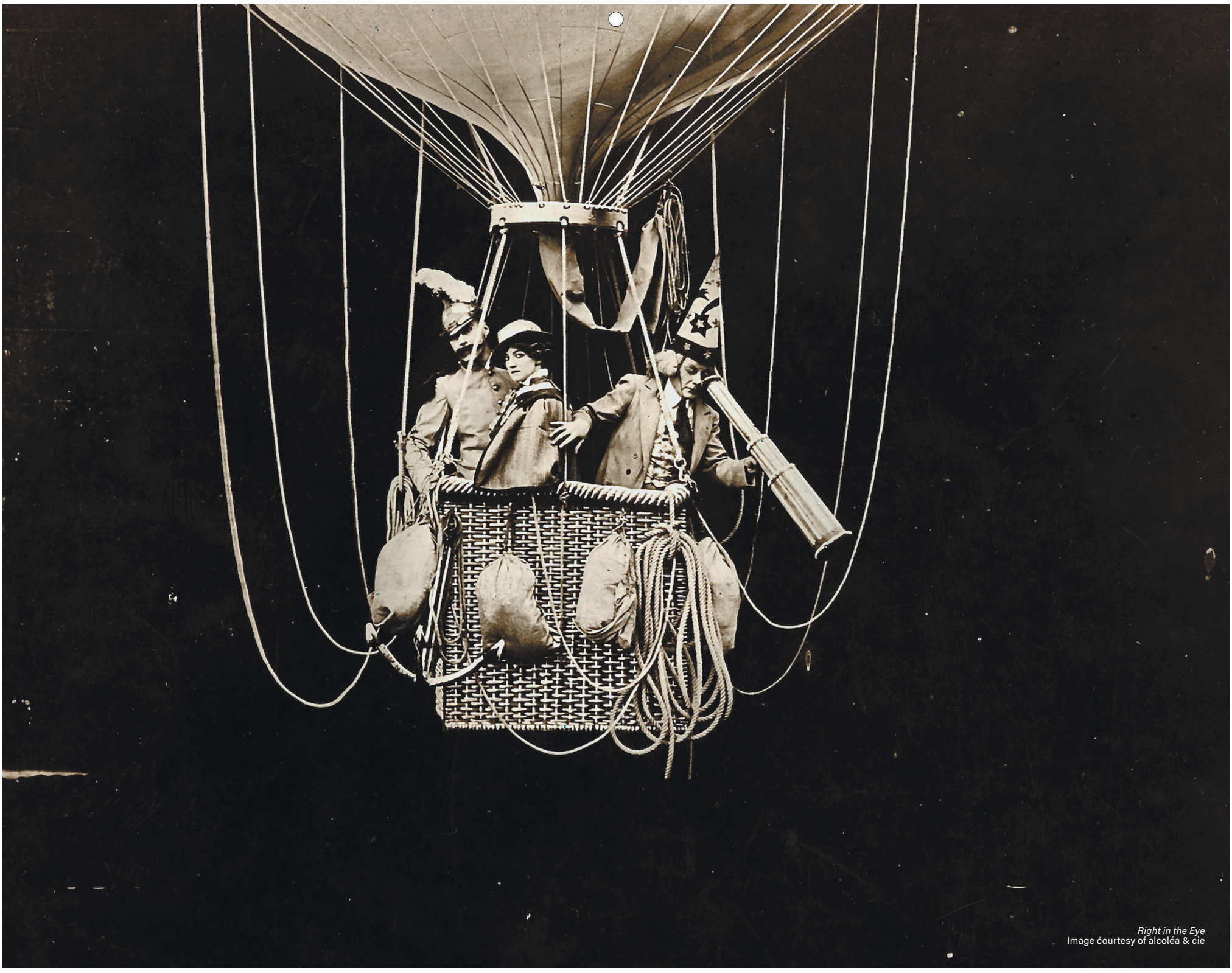
## 25/26 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE
## RENNIE HARRIS PUREMOVEMENT

**During the 2025–26 season, we concluded our transformative three-year residency with Philadelphia choreographer Rennie Harris** and Rennie Harris Puremovement, culminating in the world premiere of *Losing My Religion*. Commissioned as part of the *America Unfinished* season, the work explored questions of faith, identity, and resilience through Harris's groundbreaking fusion of hip-hop and theatrical storytelling. The residency also marked the continued success of **Harris's previous Penn Live Arts commission, *American Street Dancer*,** which went on to a celebrated engagement at the Joyce Theater in New York and **was recognized as one of the year's standout dance works by *The New York Times*.**

**Throughout the residency, Harris invited audiences and students into his creative process.** An open rehearsal offered a behind-the-scenes look at the making of *Losing My Religion*, while teaching artists and company members led workshops at West Philadelphia High School and George Washington Carver High School for Engineering and Science in the weeks leading up to the performance. Harris also visited Penn Professor Margit Edwards' first-year seminar, Theatre as Storytelling: Black Theatre and Performance Practice, and Penn First Plus students gathered for a pre-show dinner and discussion exploring the work's themes before attending the performance.

This residency stands as **a powerful example of our commitment to sustained artistic partnership**—supporting the creation of ambitious new work while fostering meaningful connections among artists, students, and the Philadelphia community.

A video of Rennie Harris's 2026 artist residency can be accessed by scanning this QR code.



*Right in the Eye*
Image courtesy of alcoléa & cie

# MARCH 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7<br>**LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12<br>**LES BALLETS TROCKADERO DE MONTE CARLO**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 13<br>**LES BALLETS TROCKADERO DE MONTE CARLO**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM, 7:30 PM |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18<br>**ENDEA OWENS & THE COOKOUT**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

The youngest but most enthusiastic audiences **sold out three of this year's four Student Discovery Performances:** MOMIX's *Alice*, Alcolea & Cie's movie concert *Right in the Eye*, and Rennie Harris Puremovement's *Losing My Religion*. **Twenty percent of this year's student patrons also participated in school-based, pre-show programming delivered by local teaching artists:** they learned basic House dance moves before seeing Ephrat Asherie, experimented with Foley sounds to prepare for the films of Georges Melies, and practiced working as an ensemble prior to the spectacle of MOMIX's *Alice*.

Students in partner schools George Washington Carver High School for Engineering and Science. and West Philadelphia High School also worked with Rennie Harris Puremovement company members and teaching artist Donnell Powell to explore the ideas behind *Losing My Religion* and joined a full house in the Prince Theatre to attend the company's open rehearsal.



In May, amid the Annenberg Center Outdoor Plaza's cherry blossoms, over 2,500 school children attended the 41st annual Philadelphia Children's Festival, taking in performances by JazzReach, Literature to Life, TheatreWorks USA, and magician Bill Blagg, participating in activities led by Philly Girls Jump, Fleisher Art Memorial, Wagner Free Institute of Science, and Penn's own Common Press, ICA, and Penn Museum. **"They loved the whole experience," said one third grade teacher.**



Jorge Luis Pacheco
Photo courtesy of
Jorge Luis Pacheco

# APRIL 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8<br>**LE CONCERT DE L'HOSTEL DIEU**<br>Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral<br>7 PM | 9 | 10 |
| 11<br>**SARAH ELIZABETH CHARLES**<br>Prince Theatre<br>7 PM | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16<br>**GIBNEY COMPANY**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 17<br>**GIBNEY COMPANY**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25<br>**PHILIP GLASS ENSEMBLE**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7 PM | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30<br>**JOHN SCOTT DANCE**<br>Prince Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 1 |

## INSIGHTS

**From intimate conversations to free dance masterclasses, engagement programs offered many pathways for patrons to explore the influences and ideas of their favorite artists.** With virtuoso Latin jazz pianist Jorge Luis Pacheco, Penn musicology doctoral student Hannah Junco explored the flexibility Pacheco's classical training gave him and the role of emotion in improvisation. Conversations with the artists behind New York Stage and Film's new play readings revealed the starts and stops of bringing a new work to life. And moderator and educator Isy Abraham-Raveson asked the creators of *The Sex Lives of Puppets* what audiences could learn from the show's focus on the intimate experiences of older people.

Patrons stopped by The Listening Cabinet, a lobby installation featuring crowd-sourced questions about the American experiment, and debated what more could be added to the Declaration of Independence. Others jumped—literally!—at the chance to take a masterclass with Virginie Brunelle, Paul Taylor's Cathy McCann, or Dance Theatre of Harlem's Robert Garland. **The Powell-Vandever Dance Masterclass series** has grown to be an important resource for Philadelphia's professional dance community, with nearly half of participants identifying as post-graduates.

Throughout the season, artists also reflected on the *America Unfinished* theme and how it related to their work. Many meditated on what felt challenging or hopeful about the semiquincentennial. As choreographer Tommie-Waheed Evans put it: **"When I see a group of people from different backgrounds come together and commit to the same process…that feels like a version of democracy."**



*The Sex Lives of Puppets*

# MAY 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1<br>**JOHN SCOTT DANCE**<br>Prince Theatre<br>2 PM |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7<br>**DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM | 8<br>**DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>2 PM, 7:30 PM |
| 9<br>**DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>3 PM | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21<br>**PENN ALUMNI WEEKEND** | 22<br>**PENN ALUMNI WEEKEND** |
| 23<br>**PENN ALUMNI WEEKEND** | 24<br>**PENN COMMENCEMENT** | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31<br>**MEMORIAL DAY** | | | | | |

## ENGAGING ALUMNI

**Throughout the 2025–26 season, we strengthened connections with alumni, parents, and friends through a series of events celebrating the University's rich performing arts legacy and ambitious vision for its future.** The year began with *The Next Act: Performing Arts at Penn Take Center Stage,* first in Chicago and then in New York. The program featured Executive & Artistic Director Christopher Gruits and Penn's inaugural Vice Provost for the Arts, Dr. Timothy Rommen, sharing about the University's expanding commitment to the arts through its strategic plan, new leadership, and investments in performance spaces.

Homecoming featured *Then & Now: The Rich History and Exciting Future for the Performing Arts at Penn!*, tracing the evolution of the performing arts at Penn from the founding of the Glee Club in 1862 to today's more than 75 student performing arts groups and included an opportunity to explore treasures from the Penn archives.

We also fostered community through intimate gatherings hosted by board members in the Hamptons and Miami, cultivating new relationships while sharing the story of the artistic renaissance underway at Penn. The season concluded in New York with a special alumni event featuring composer Gabriel Mann, C'95, who co-wrote the original score for the new Broadway musical *The Lost Boys*, with his band, The Rescues. The conversation offered a behind-the-scenes look at the creative and collaborative process of adapting the beloved cult classic film for the stage, highlighting the extraordinary impact of Penn alumni across the performing arts.

Scan this QR Code to watch a recording of the program *Then & Now*.



MOMIX
Photo by Sharen Bradford

# JUNE 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4<br>**PLATT CENTER COMMUNITY WEEKEND**<br>Platt Center | 5<br>**PLATT CENTER COMMUNITY WEEKEND**<br>Platt Center<br>**AN EVENING WITH AUDRA MCDONALD**<br>Zellerbach Theatre<br>7:30 PM |
| 6<br>**PLATT CENTER COMMUNITY WEEKEND**<br>Platt Center | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19<br>**JUNETEENTH** |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CAREER CONNECTIONS

We expanded our employer partnerships this year to include nonprofit theatres **Theatre Horizon** and **Kansas City Repertory Theatre**, film production company **Brownstone Productions**, and music studio **Artist House**, for a total of seven paid opportunities for students across the nation and locally in Philadelphia. **Penn alumni connections are the foundations of these opportunities, allowing students to build their Penn relationship network while exploring their chosen fields.**

This year's applicant pool was the most academically diverse to date, representing all four Penn undergraduate schools and 23 distinct majors ranging from mathematical economics to fine arts. Students who had already found internships at institutions like **Black Star Film Festival** and the **Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences** received funding awards to support their living expenses.

Many upper-class students explored a second year of internships, developing a more well-rounded sense of their chosen industry or making stronger connections to their field of study. The impact of these opportunities is more than a leg up in an industry – students share that they feel newly confident in their skills and relationships. "My supervisors gave me real responsibility," said past **FringeArts** intern Sylvia Erdely. "This new feeling of trust…is one I will carry forward."

Scan this QR code to read more about students' summer internship experiences.



DakhaBrakha
Photo by Vitaliy Yurasov

# JULY 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 INDEPENDENCE DAY | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

## GUEST EVENTS

The 2025–26 academic year marked a period of exceptional growth for our Events and Guest Services team. By year's end, **we proudly hosted more than 170 rental events, generating over $1 million in rental revenue while welcoming thousands of visitors to campus. The year also marked the first full season supporting an expanded footprint at Irvine Auditorium,** where the Guest Services team provided staffing for 60% more events than the previous fiscal year.

Throughout the fall and spring semesters, we partnered with a diverse range of University and community organizations, welcoming both longtime clients and first-time presenters. Signature annual events included the **50th anniversary of Wharton Follies,** the **Alumni Award of Merit Gala,** the **MLK Lecture in Social Justice**, and the **Legacy on Broad dance competition.** New partnerships brought an equally dynamic mix of programming to campus, including a performance by **K-pop group Purple Kiss,** the ***El Boricua Está de Fiesta* comedy showcase,** and **The Orpheus Club of Philadelphia's Mid-Winter Concert.**

Through outstanding guest services and operational excellence, we continue to position our venues as premier destinations for artistic, academic, and community events, strengthening the University's role as a vibrant cultural hub.



Soweto Gospel Choir
Photo by Stephan Meekers

# AUGUST 2027

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

## BY THE **NUMBERS**

**4** PLA Commissions

**5** Unique Exhibitions in the Annenberg Center

**24** World & Philadelphia Premieres

**23%** Increase in Penn Students Attending PLA Performances

**26%** Increase in PLA Subscribers

**16** Philadelphia & PLA Debuts

**44** Penn Student Artists Mentored 48 Local Grade School Children in Platt House's *After School Arts at Penn*

**60+** Community Partners in Toll the Bell Sound Installation & Programming

**1,200+** INSIGHTS Participants

**2,000** Penn Students involved in Performing Arts Clubs on Campus

**5,000** School Children Reached

**104,000** Patrons Reached Across PLA Venues

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MOMIX
Photos Courtesy of MOMIX



Paul Taylor Dance Company
Photo by Whitney Browne

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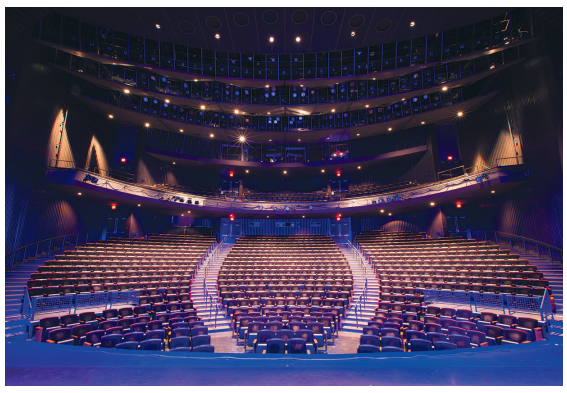
As the crossroads for the performing arts at Penn, and one of the largest collections of performance spaces in Philadelphia, Penn Live Arts plays a vital role in fostering a dynamic ecosystem of creativity and culture. By bringing together artists, patrons, scholars, students, and community partners, our comprehensive venue infrastructure ensures that the performing arts thrive at Penn and in the greater Philadelphia region.



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**Architectural Rendering of Platt Student Performing Arts Center - Opening in 2027**
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**Architectural Rendering of the Stuart Weitzman Theatre - Opening in 2029**
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Akash Odedra Company
Photo by Angela Grabowska

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Dance Theatre of Harlem
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Left: Paul Taylor Dance Company