



NEWS

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Penn Live Arts Announces its 2023-24 Season

Diverse season includes:

Ukraine: The Edge of Freedom

Toll the Bell

Artists-in-Residence Rennie Harris Puremovement and the Negro Ensemble Company

Dance, jazz, new and early music, theatre,

world music, cirque and partnership with World Cafe Live,

plus the Philadelphia Children's Festival and Student Discovery programs

(Philadelphia – April 21, 2023) — [Penn Live Arts](#) (PLA) today announces its [2023-24](#) season, curated by **Executive and Artistic Director Christopher A. Gruits**. Following its highly successful 50th anniversary celebration, PLA steps forward into its next 50 years, presenting the world's best artists and multidisciplinary performing arts for audiences at the University of Pennsylvania and across the greater Philadelphia region. Subscriptions are on sale now at [PennLiveArts.org](#) or 215.898.3900.

In its **2023-24 season**, **Penn Live Arts** broadens its perspective, connecting with artists from across the world and illuminating critical issues, globally and locally. A special focus, [Ukraine: The Edge of Freedom](#), features artists urgently raising awareness about the country's challenges while honoring the resounding spirit and resilience of its people. In [Toll the Bell](#), ongoing artist residencies with [Rennie Harris Puremovement](#) and the [Negro Ensemble Company](#) explore the gun violence epidemic affecting Philadelphia and the country as a whole. PLA will expand the artistic repertory with five commissioned works and 21 world and local premieres, while also expanding presentations into new venues. PLA will also showcase a powerhouse lineup of dance favorites, including [Ballets Jazz Montréal](#), [MOMIX](#) and [Mark Morris Dance Group](#), as well as the biggest names in jazz, including Philadelphia natives [Christian McBride](#) and [Ruth Naomi Floyd](#), pioneering new music, cutting-edge theatre, early and popular music, cirque, and extensive curricular and community collaborations.

"Our 2023-24 season is exceptionally broad and diverse, in artistry, innovative ideas and visionary perspectives," says **Penn Live Arts Executive and Artistic Director Christopher A. Gruits**. "We will have numerous opportunities to address issues of vital social importance and provide platforms for thoughtful engagement and action, employing the arts as a force for positive change. At the same time, we will continue to bring our audiences performances that spark the full range of human emotions, reinforcing our shared humanity."

UKRAINE: THE EDGE OF FREEDOM

On the front line of defending freedom, Ukraine's fight represents a broader hope for thriving democracies around the world. The Edge of Freedom focuses on artists calling attention to the challenges the nation has been facing and celebrates the artistry and soul of this European country rich with cultural history. PLA will link the resounding spirit shown abroad with the significant Ukrainian American population in Philadelphia, reminding us all, through the lens of the performing arts, how interconnected we truly are.

[Balaklava Blues](#), an activist-driven, genre-bending group mixing traditional folk music and transnational EDM

(February 25), Brooklyn-based Ukrainian jazz pianist and film composer [Fima Chupakhin](#) (February 29), vocal artist and composer [Mariana Sadovska](#) (March 1), and Kyiv's sonic feast and visual spectacle [DakhaBrakha](#) (March 3) all make **Penn Live Arts debuts** with their performances.

TOLL THE BELL

In the 2023-24 season, Penn Live Arts focuses on gun violence through its artist residencies with the [Negro Ensemble Company](#) and [Rennie Harris Puremovement](#). Philadelphia has experienced historic increases in gun-related crime, claiming an unprecedented number of lives and bringing immeasurable pain and trauma to its communities. This endemic issue affects everyone, but disproportionately impacts urban neighborhoods and people of color. PLA will explore gun violence and its aftermath through a range of programs and perspectives, concluding with *Toll the Bell*, a city-wide sound installation of simultaneous and sustained bell ringing that honors the victims of gun violence and raises critical awareness for addressing common-sense gun reform.

Two **residencies** will focus on the theme of gun violence. The **Negro Ensemble Company (NEC)** returns for a second year, producing the world premiere of [No Policy, No Justice](#) (October 20-21), two commissioned one-act plays centered on the tragedy and trauma of gun violence, and a revival of Charles Fuller's Obie Award-winning [Zooman and the Sign](#), set in Philadelphia in 1979. (February 15-18)

[Rennie Harris Puremovement](#) begins the first year of a three-year residency in the 2023-24 season, bringing a 30th anniversary retrospective of works that helped catapult his company to the world stage. In *Students of the Asphalt Jungle*, *March of the Antman* and *P-Funk*, Harris explores gun violence, gangs and other themes as relevant today as when they first premiered. (March 22-23)

[Toll the Bell](#) culminates in a city-wide sound installation of simultaneous and sustained bell ringing that honors the victims of gun violence and raises critical awareness around issues of gun violence. (June 7)

DANCE

Penn Live Arts presents eight dance companies in the 2023-24 season replete with PLA-commissioned works, world and Philadelphia premieres, and featuring some of the world's greatest ensembles and choreographers. The series showcases a wide array of styles, including the PLA debut of [Malpaso Dance Company](#) (October 6-7), [Doug Varone and Dancers](#) (November 17-18), [Dorrance Dance](#) performing Duke Ellington's *The Nutcracker* (December 8-9), [BODYTRAFFIC](#) (January 19-20), [Ballets Jazz Montreal](#) (February 9-10), [Rennie Harris Puremovement](#) (March 22-23), [MOMIX](#) (April 19-20), and [Mark Morris Dance Group](#) (May 31-June 1).

JAZZ

Penn Live Arts kicks off the 2023-24 season on **September 29** with the [Branford Marsalis Quartet](#), featuring **West Philly's very own Justin Faulkner** on drums. [Ulysses Owens Jr. Big Band](#) returns **October 29** and up and coming alto sax player [Erena Terakubo](#) makes her Philadelphia debut on **November 19**. West Philly native [Christian McBride](#) returns to the Annenberg Center for the first time since 2011 with [New Jawn](#) (**December 3**). [Cecile McLorin Salvant](#) returns **February 3**, Philly native [Ruth Naomi Floyd](#) makes her Penn Live Arts debut **April 25**, and the Philadelphia debut of Germany's [NDR Bigband and Kinan Azmeh](#) closes out the jazz series **May 10**.

ACCELERATOR

Penn Live Arts invests in artists and their futures and the development of repertoire through its **Accelerator Program**, providing expanded resources to help finish and bring new works to the stage. In 2023-24 the program supports [Malpaso Dance Company](#), [The Crossing](#), [the Negro Ensemble Company](#), [BODYTRAFFIC](#), and [Rennie Harris Puremovement](#). "Penn Live Arts in its first 50 years brought countless world premiere performances to Philadelphia, supporting and presenting new work across multiple disciplines," noted **Gruits**. "Today, our Accelerator Program is key to continuing that legacy, building a thriving future for dance, music, and theatre, here in Philadelphia and across the performing arts globally."

MUSIC AND THEATRE

Penn Live Arts presents **The Crossing** in three productions. In the first they are joined by the [Ragazze Quartet](#) for the world premiere of [SIN-EATER](#) (October 14-15), a PLA commission. Two performances of [The Crossing at Christmas](#) take place at **Iron Gate Theatre** on the Penn campus (December 15), and they close PLA's

2023-24 season with the Philadelphia premiere of [Tyshawn Sorey's *Monochromatic Light \(Afterlife\)*](#) at the **Icebox Project Space, New Music at Crane Arts** in Fishtown (June 14-15).

Multiple collaborations will take place with Penn academic departments including vocal ensemble [Cappella Pratensis & Sollazzo Ensemble](#) performing [Feast of the Swan](#) (October 19), co-sponsored with Penn's **Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies**; [The Songs of Solomon, the music of Salomone Rossi](#), with Penn Music Department Artist-in-Residence Meg Bragle (November 9); Penn's [Quartet-in-Residence the Daedalus Quartet](#) collaborating with Professor Jay Kirk of the **English Department** on a program entitled [Bartok's Monster](#) (January 21); and the [JACK Quartet](#) giving the world premiere of [Beautiful Trouble](#) by composer and **Assistant Professor of Music Natacha Diels** (February 2).

Additional music in the 2023-24 season includes a **partnership between Penn Live Arts and World Cafe Live** to co-present [Aoife O'Donovan](#) (October 21), [Balaklava Blues](#) (February 25), and [Madeleine Peyroux](#) (May 12). The world music series includes [Sur-Sudha](#) (January 27), [Ladysmith Black Mambazo](#) (March 9), and [Orquesta Akokan](#) (April 12). The [Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir](#) (February 8) and [Alarm Will Sound](#) (April 14) round out the music series.

In theatre, the Philadelphia premiere of [The Acting Company's *The Odyssey*](#) (September 30-October 1), brings new life to Homer's homecoming classic, based on the revelatory translation by **MacArthur Fellow Emily Wilson** of Penn's **Department of Classical Studies**. The **Negro Ensemble Company** produces [No Policy, No Justice](#) (October 20-21) and [Zooman and the Sign](#) (February 15-18).

CIRQUE

Audiences of all ages will be transfixed by the breathtaking feats and flights of fancy of [The Flying Karamazov Brothers](#) (November 12), [Cirque Mechanics](#) (January 28), and [Machine de Cirque](#) (May 4).

FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

The 2023-24 season will also include the annual **Philadelphia Children's Festival** (May 2-4), as well as school-day [Student Discovery](#) performances of **The Acting Company: *The Odyssey*** (October 2), **Doug Varone and Dancers** (November 17), **BODYTRAFFIC** (January 19), **Ballets Jazz Montréal** (February 9), **Negro Ensemble Company: *Zooman and the Sign*** (February 15), **Rennie Harris Puremovement** (March 22), and **MOMIX** (April 19).

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.

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