



NEWS

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The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Pennsylvania Announces 2017-18 Season

First Season under the Leadership of Executive and Artistic Director Christopher A. Gruits Features:

Season Opening World Premiere Co-Commission with FringeArts featuring Pig Iron Theatre Company, The Crossing, Philadelphia Boys Choir and Philadelphia Girls Choir, and new music ensemble Contemporaneous

Full Dance Series Returns to the Zellerbach Theatre Stage

Highly Acclaimed Choreographer Mark Morris will be the Annenberg Center's Inaugural Artist-in-Residence

Collaborations with prominent Philadelphia cultural organizations, including FringeArts, The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia as residency partner, Pig Iron Theatre Company, and BalletX, as well as with University of Pennsylvania schools and programs

Three Week Festival of Cuban Arts and Culture

Four World Premieres, Nine Philadelphia Premieres, Six Philadelphia Debuts, and 15 Annenberg Center Debuts

(Philadelphia – May 4, 2017 – [The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts](#) at the University of Pennsylvania has announced its 2017-18 season, the first under the leadership of Executive and Artistic Director **Christopher A. Gruits** since he took the helm of the Annenberg Center in the fall of 2016.

“The Annenberg Center has a longstanding commitment to facilitating and promoting innovation in the arts,” said Gruits. “It has a strong history of presenting contemporary and cutting edge work and our 2017-18 season reaffirms this tradition while also looking to the future and supporting the University of Pennsylvania’s focus on innovation in academics and research. We are thrilled to be partnering with some of Philadelphia’s leading

arts institutions to develop new work across theatre and music, collaborating with multiple departments across the University, and presenting some of today's finest artists in dance, music, and family programming."

The 2017-18 season features a return to a full dance series of six dance ensembles; premiere theatrical productions; musical artists from diverse genres including jazz, world music, classical and hip-hop; a three-week Cuba Festival, and family and holiday programming. Four world premieres and nine Philadelphia premieres will take place on the Annenberg Center's stages and six artists or companies will make their Philadelphia debuts. The Annenberg Center launches its inaugural artist residency with renowned choreographer [Mark Morris](#) and a new residency partnership with [The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia](#).

SEASON OPENER

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts' 2017-18 Season opens with the world premiere of ***A Period of Animate Existence***, a synthesis of theatre, music, and design co-commissioned with [FringeArts](#) and part of the 2017 Fringe Festival. **(September 22-24, 2017)** Created by [Pig Iron Theatre Company](#), this production addresses the timely topics of environmental instability and rapid technological change, and features [The Crossing](#), Philadelphia's Grammy®-nominated, professional chamber choir, the [Philadelphia Boys Choir](#) and the [Philadelphia Girls Choir](#), and [Contemporaneous](#), a new music ensemble based in New York. The Annenberg Center will partner with the University of Pennsylvania's Program in Environmental Humanities and Theatre Arts Program for these performances.

MARK MORRIS, ANNEBERG CENTER INAUGURAL ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Highly acclaimed choreographer Mark Morris has been named the Annenberg Center's first Artist-in-Residence, a new initiative designed to feature significant, creative innovators of our time in a program that will facilitate performance and spur collaborations across the University of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia-area schools. As part of the artist residency Morris will work with University students studying dance and music, as well as those studying medicine, science, and other non-arts disciplines, and with the broader Philadelphia community. This unique artist residency aims to create deeper connections to the arts by facilitating interactions that show how art can enhance and support other disciplines and modes of thinking and spur innovation. "I very much look forward to returning to Philadelphia for our performances and residency at the Annenberg Center," said Morris. "In addition to performances we will offer classes to people with Parkinson's and their partners, dance and music workshops, a selection of movie musicals and more!"

DANCE

A full six-show, dance series returns to the Annenberg Center, widely considered Philadelphia's premiere stage for dance.

- [The Mark Morris Dance Group](#) **(February 9-10, 2018)** returns to Philadelphia for the first time since 2004, presenting *Dances to American Music*, a program of four works including two Philadelphia premieres, set to music by American composers.
- [Ballet X](#), Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet company, makes its highly-anticipated Annenberg Center debut **(October 6-7, 2017)**.
- [Hubbard Street Dance Chicago](#) celebrates its 40th anniversary with a return to Philadelphia after a 10-year absence **(October 20-21, 2017)**.
- [Raphael Xavier](#), a 2016 Guggenheim Fellow and alumnus of Philadelphia's premier hip-hop dance company, Rennie Harris Puremovement, makes his Annenberg Center debut **(November 4, 2017)**.

- [L.A. Dance Project](#) (January 12-13, 2018), founded by choreographer and former New York City Ballet principal dancer Benjamin Millepied, makes its Philadelphia headline debut.
- [DanzAbierta](#), one of Cuba's most innovative dance troupes, makes its Philadelphia debut (March 22-23, 2018) on its first U.S. tour, kicking off the Annenberg Center's Cuba Festival.

THEATRE

Continuing its long tradition as a presenter of cutting-edge theatre, the Annenberg Center gives two world premieres and one Philadelphia premiere theatre production in the 2017-18 season.

- *A Period of Animate Existence*, a synthesis of theatre, music, and design co-commissioned with [FringeArts](#) and part of the 2017 Fringe Festival. (September 22-24, 2017) Created by [Pig Iron Theatre Company](#), this production addresses the timely topics of environmental instability and rapid technological change, and features [The Crossing](#), Philadelphia's Grammy®-nominated, professional chamber choir, the [Philadelphia Boys Choir](#) and the [Philadelphia Girls Choir](#), and [Contemporaneous](#), a new music ensemble based in New York. The Annenberg Center will partner with the University of Pennsylvania's Program in Environmental Humanities and Theatre Arts Program for these performances.
- [Haruki Murakami's Sleep](#) (October 27-28, 2017). Inspired by best-selling writer Haruki Murakami's shattering 1994 short story, *Sleep* catapults its unlikely heroine from sleep-deprived state to an explosive deconstruction of her life. Created by the Obie-winning, Brooklyn-based theatre company Ripe Time, this world premiere is a gripping exploration of a shifting universe of gender and power. Students in the University's Theatre Arts Program will work with *Sleep's* creator, Rachel Dickstein, in advance of the production to observe the creation of a new theatrical work.
- [Sancho: An Act of Remembrance](#) (April 13-14, 2018) In this revealing and humorous one-man show, creator, writer, and celebrated Royal Shakespeare Company actor Paterson Joseph inhabits the curious, daringly determined Charles "Sancho" Ignatius—composer, social satirist, general man of refinement—while shining light on the often misunderstood narratives of African-British experience. A Philadelphia premiere.

CUBA FESTIVAL

The Annenberg Center's three-week celebration of Cuban culture in dance and music will feature some of Cuba's finest emerging talents in Philadelphia debuts, as well as welcome back Philly favorites.

- [DanzAbierta](#), one of Cuba's most innovative dance troupes, makes its Philadelphia debut (March 22-23, 2018) on its first U.S. tour, kicking off the Annenberg Center's Cuba Festival.
- Grammy®-nominated [The Pedrito Martinez Group](#) (March 24, 2018), brings a unique fusion of traditional folkloric music and contemporary jazz rhythms in its Annenberg Center debut.
- Discovered and championed by Quincy Jones, and boasting piano chops reflective of the jazz greats, Grammy® nominated pianist [Alfredo Rodríguez](#) makes his Philadelphia debut. (April 5, 2018)
- [Daymé Arocena](#), powerful Cuban jazz-pop vocalist, also makes her Philadelphia debut (April 6, 2018) with fearless vocals that draw on the rhythms of Afro-Cuban traditions, the nimble athleticism of jazz, and the catchy hooks of pop.
- The legendary and beloved [Chucho Valdés Trio](#) brings the Cuba Festival to a close (April 13, 2018) Winner of six Grammy® Awards and three Latin Grammy® Awards, Cuban pianist Chucho Valdés is at the top of his game.

MUSIC

The Annenberg Center presents music from diverse genres including jazz, world, classical and hip-hop in its 2017-18 season.

- The [Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia](#) will be the Annenberg Center's first orchestra-in-residence, presenting three concerts in non-traditional formats. (**November 1, 2017; January 31, 2018; and March 28, 2018**)
- [Black Violin](#), the classically-trained string players and hip-hop duo, Kevin Sylvester and Wilner Baptiste, bust genres and shatter stereotypes with their mix of classical, hip-hop, rock, and R&B in their Annenberg Center debut. (**October 11, 2017**).
- The [Birdland All-Stars featuring Tommy Igoe](#) returns to the touring stage for the first time in five years, bringing New York's best jazz musicians to Philadelphia in the group's Annenberg Center debut. (**February 17, 2018**)
- [Téada](#), Ireland's leading musical export, makes their debut at the Annenberg Center for St. Patrick's Day. (**March 17, 2018**)
- **Jazz Epistles - [Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya](#), and [Hugh Masekela](#)**: It's been 60 years since Abdullah Ibrahim and Hugh Masekela performed together. Now, these iconic South African jazz instrumentalists reunite on a first-time tour. Both original members of the Jazz Epistles, South African's earliest and most influential jazz bebop band, these giants take the stage to celebrate the group's history through music from their seminal *Jazz Epistles* recording as well as hits from each illustrious artist's career. (**April 29, 2018**)
- [The Daedalus Quartet](#), the University of Pennsylvania's string quartet in residence, will collaborate with the Annenberg Center throughout the 2017-18 season in a series of performances that use the campus as a "canvas." Details will be released at a later date.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

- The legendary [Peking Acrobats](#) make their Annenberg Center debut (**March 9-10, 2018**).
- [Erth's Dinosaur Zoo Live](#) makes its Philadelphia debut (**March 24, 2018**).
- The Annenberg Center presents its annual **Philadelphia Children's Festival (May 17-19, 2018)**.

RINGING IN THE HOLIDAYS

- [Irish Christmas in America](#) (**December 9, 2017**)
- [Canadian Brass Christmas](#) (**December 10, 2017**)

TICKETS

Subscriptions to the Annenberg Center's 2017-18 season are on sale now at AnnenbergCenter.org or 215.898.3900. Single tickets will go on sale at a later date.

CHRISTOPHER A. GRUITS

Christopher Gruits is the recently-appointed Executive and Artistic Director of the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the former Vice President and Executive Producer of Presentations, the programming and arts broadcasting division of Interlochen Center for the Arts. At Interlochen he oversaw all live presentations and webcasts, music broadcasting on Interlochen Public Radio, and produced over 600 events per year across all arts disciplines including the Interlochen Arts Festival, one of

the largest arts festivals in the United States. He is the former Director of e-Strategy at Carnegie Hall where he created the institution's first digital strategy guiding all content and messaging across digital platforms (a \$9 million channel) while significantly increasing audience engagement and online revenue through original web content. Prior to his role at Carnegie Hall, he was Commercial Director for DilettanteMusic.com, the web's first and largest social music network for classical musicians and listeners. At DilettanteMusic.com he created the web's first "Digital Composer in Residence" project with the London Sinfonietta. He holds a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary humanities with a concentration in arts management from Michigan State University, and a master's in business administration with a focus on strategy from the University of Edinburgh.

ABOUT THE ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts (ACPA) serves as a major cultural destination and crossroads connecting Penn and the greater Philadelphia region through innovative human expression in theatre, music, dance, and film, serving an annual audience of almost 50,000. The Annenberg Center also serves as a key resource for the arts at Penn, connecting master artists with Penn students in support of and as an enhancement to the arts curriculum. Student performing arts groups are also key users of the Annenberg Center's multiple performance and rehearsal spaces, while also staffing many operational roles throughout the academic year. In reflection of Penn's core values as a world-respected academic institution, the Annenberg Center emphasizes artistic and intellectual excellence, diversity, and rigor in its presentations; prioritizes broad inclusiveness in the artists, audiences, and groups it serves; manages outstanding performance, conference, and meeting facilities; and stresses comprehensive event planning, production support, and customer service. The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is a major provider of performing arts access for school children and actively engages a broad range of primary, secondary, and post-secondary student audiences and inclusive constituencies from the campus, community, and greater Philadelphia region.

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