

scene



INSPIRING ARTISTS

WORTHAM CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

ANNOUNCES 2023-24 SEASON

COVER STORY

Wortham Center for the Performing Arts announces inspiring artists for new season

Courtesy of the Wortham Center
Special to Scene

The Wortham Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Asheville is proud to announce a full lineup of world-class companies and performers for its 2023-24 season, which runs from September through May.

Beginning with a season-opening show Sept. 23, the Wortham Center's 2023-24 season brings a wide range of top touring artists in music, theater, dance, comedy and other performing arts, as well as ancillary classes, workshops and events.

"This season offers a chance for adventure, excitement and exploration, giving patrons the opportunity to discover new places, unique genres, emerging artists and enjoy immersive experiences," said Rae Geoffrey, Wortham Center's managing director.

Throughout the nine-month season, the Wortham Center will present 62 performances from 26 artists. An additional 18 performances from 10 artists make up this season's Student Series, which provides school groups and families with the opportunity to see world-class works of art.

"It is our largest season ever, full of energy, incredible artists, adventure and risk," said Geoffrey. "These performances push the envelope on genre and style and represent a wide selection of artists reflecting our cultural diversity."

Tickets for all performances are on sale at worthamarts.org, as well as in person at the box office or by calling 828-257-4530. Wortham Center offers flexible, multishow discount packages starting with as few as three performances.

Savings range from 10%-25% off regular prices, depending on the number of performances; multishow packages are available only through the box office, either in person or by calling 828-257-4530. Season subscriptions offer the biggest discount of 25% off ticket prices. Details available by calling the box office.

The season kicks off with **Artrageous** (Sept. 23), an immersive, one-of-a-kind arts experience that combines all modes of artistic expression on one stage. Described as "Picasso meets Blue Man Group" by The Chicago Tribune, Artrageous brings multitalented visual artists together with world-class musicians and highly trained dancers to create stunning works of art

in real time.

Next is needed for country music icon and multi-Grammy-winning artist **Kathy Mattea** (Oct. 7). With a soothing yet powerful voice, the legendary hitmaker brings elements of traditional country, folk, bluegrass and gospel to her music, fusing these influences with all the intimacy, heartfelt honesty and musical authenticity of a singer-songwriter.

Prepare to be mesmerized as classical music and hip-hop collide with two-time Grammy-nominated duo **Black Violin** (Oct. 12). For more than two decades, this charismatic duo has re-conceptualized how a violin concert looks and sounds, boldly merging string arrangements with modern beats and vocals.

The nation's largest comedy club network is back with **The Comedy Zone** (four weekends: Oct. 13 & 14, Dec. 1 & 2, Jan. 19 & 20, and Feb. 23 & 24). After a popular run last season, this hilarious collective returns to bring top-notch stand-up comedians — seen in specials on Comedy Central, HBO Comedy, Netflix, Hulu and more.

Embark on an epic journey of adventure and discovery with one of the country's leading professional touring theatre companies when **The Acting Company presents "The Odyssey"** (Oct. 20). With a talented cast, stunning visuals and superb direction, this season's riveting stage adaptation brings to life the heroism, drama and intrigue of one of the greatest tales in Western literature.

Rounding out the October performances is the dynamic fiddle playing of **Andrew Finn Magill** (Oct. 27). With masterful musicianship that's earned him multiple appearances on MTV-U, PBS and NPR, this virtuosic musician blends traditional Irish music with jazz, bluegrass and other world influences to deliver a musical experience like no other.

Witness the magic of Disney through its most memorable movie music when the house band of The National Jazz Museum in Harlem presents **When You Wish Upon A Star: A Jazz Tribute to 100 Years of Disney** (Nov. 2). The Smithsonian-affiliated organization delivers an unforgettable evening of popular songs from famous films including *Snow White*, *Lady and the Tramp*, *Mary Poppins* and *The Jungle Book*.

With rich harmonies, powerful vocals and an electrifying stage presence, **Trey McLaughlin & the Sounds of Zamar** (Nov. 11) creates an unforgettable and uplifting musical experience that's gained them viral success, amassing millions of



Parsons Dance, appearing Jan. 26 and 27 at the Wortham Center, showcases a dynamic fusion of styles that combines athleticism, grace and unparalleled innovation. PROVIDED BY THE WORTHAM CENTER

fans and followers from all corners of the globe as they transcend genre, deliver jubilation and speak to the heart of every listener.

Next, a local and beloved holiday tradition returns for the 21st year, ushering in the winter season with a world-class display of Celtic, American-roots and world-influenced music, rousing dance, and timeless stories. This year, **A Swannanoa Solstice** (Dec. 17) welcomes back Josh Goforth, Zoe & Cloyd, E.J. Jones & The Piper Jones Band, and storyteller Becky Stone as host. New to the celebration this season are Irish multi-instrumentalist singer-songwriter John Doyle and Asheville-based songstress Jane Kramer.

Kicking off the new year is **Emma Langford** (Jan. 12), an award-winning artist who is fast becoming a household name and a firm fixture on the folk and songwriter scene. Writing songs imbued with the humor, vibrant imagery and dra-

ma of the rugged west coast of Ireland, with storytelling and wit ad the heart of all she does, Emma's music is "frothing with melodic charm and lyrical intrigue." (*Folk Radio UK*)

Next up: As one of the world's premier contemporary dance companies, **Parsons Dance** (Jan. 26 & 27) showcases a dynamic fusion of styles that combines athleticism, grace and unparalleled innovation. The company's unforgettable performances push the boundaries of dance and bring life-affirming artistry to audiences across the globe.

In February, experience the thrilling rhythms of Japan, the electrifying energy of passionate, percussive performance, and the otherworldly theatrical flair of **Drum Tao** (Feb. 13 & 14). With vibrant costumes, synchronized movements and thunderous beats, Drum Tao creates a mes-

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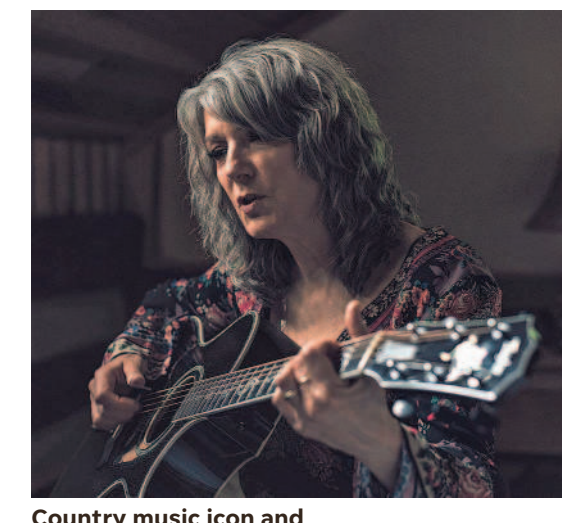
360 Allstars, performing March 27 at the Wortham Center, is a nonstop action-packed urban circus, complete with dancing, beatboxing, acrobatics, BMX biking and more. MATT LONCAR



Fan-favorite dance company Pilobolus presents "Re: Creation" on March 22 and 23 at the Wortham Center. MEGAN MOSS FREEMAN



"Ivy Rowe" follows a spunky mountain woman on a journey through life. It is scheduled April 11 and 12 at the Wortham Center. PROVIDED BY THE WORTHAM CENTER



Country music icon and multi-Grammy-winning artist Kathy Mattea is scheduled to perform Oct. 7 at the Wortham Center. PROVIDED BY THE WORTHAM CENTER

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merizing spectacle in an evening of spirited entertainment.

Later in the month, **Indian Ink presents Mrs. Krishnan's Party** (Feb. 27 & 28) — and you're invited! This interactive theater show turns audience members into welcomed guests. No two nights are ever the same in this deliciously fun cross-cultural experience, as actors juggle cooking, music, guests and unfolding drama.

March brings a night of foot-stomping, heart-pounding music when **Mark and Maggie O'Connor** (March 8) take the stage. Three-time Grammy winner and seven-time Country Music Association award recipient Mark is joined by his Grammy-award-winning violinist Maggie to blend the soulful traditions of bluegrass, country and folk with the virtuosic precision of classical music.

Laugh out loud with **Cathy Ladman** (March 16), one of the country's top comedians, whose sharp wit, clever observations and relatable humor have earned her numerous accolades and multiple guest appearances on TV and film. Sharing hilarious stories that focus on family, relationships and more, Cathy delivers a performance that is both side-splittingly funny and thought-provoking.

Next, rediscover the joy of play and creativity when highly acclaimed fan-favorite company **Pilobolus presents "Re: Creation"** (March 22 & 23) returns. Featuring fresh works with new collaborators, these talented dancers create an experience both timely and timeless, proving once again that the human body is the most expressive, universal and magical of media.

Feel the exhilarating energy of phenomenal physical performance with this international cast of world champion and world record-holding athletes and artist. **360 ALLSTARS** (March 27) is a nonstop action-packed urban circus, complete with dancing, beatboxing, acrobatics, BMX biking and more — a spectacular fusion of the extraordinary artistry that emerges from street culture.

Finishing up March is one of the most respected and influential bands in the Celtic genre. Led by the impeccable vocals of Cathy Jordan, **Dervish** (March 29) delivers heartfelt performances backed by exquisite musicianship, with songs that exude the joy of life.

Pure theatrical exhilaration awaits in the off-Broadway, Edinburgh Fringe-approved hit **"Ivy Rowe" from the Lee Smith novel "Fair and Tender Ladies"** (April 11 & 12), which follows a spunky mountain woman on a journey through life. The New York Times dubbed this stirring stage adaptation "a rare and heartfelt performance that pays tribute to the women of Appalachia, and to the heroism of strugglers everywhere."

Dance and sway to **Lizzy & the Triggersmen** (April 13), one of the hottest swing bands to come out of LA. Exuding all the old-school glamor of jazz, swing and blues, this captivatingly modern chart-topping band churns out killer dance songs in a way only a wailing



The first professional dance company dedicated to the art of stepping, **Step Afrika** performs April 19 and 20 at the Wortham Center. SEKOU LUKE

horn section can — transporting vintage jazz to a red-hot new future.

Feel the irresistible energy and heart-pounding rhythms of dance with the first professional dance company dedicated to the art of stepping. The multit-talented artists of **Step Afrika!** (April 19 & 20) showcase a unique and vibrant form of dance that combines percussive footwork, call-and-response chants, and high-energy performance.

This season, the creator of "The Book of Moron" is back with his rare breed of humor. **Robert Dubac's Stand-Up Jesus** (May 3 & 4) shines the light of truth on false prophets, duplicitous politicians and immoral sheeple as Jesus of Nazareth returns after 2,000 years as a stand-up comedian in this razor-sharp satire. Break bread during special brunch-and-a-show events with **Brunch with Jesus** (May 4 & 5).

Stunning audiences last season with imaginative and impassioned performances, Wortham's resident dance company **Stewart/Owen Dance** (10 performances, May 9–19) returns to share their latest creations, which draws on themes of passion, intimacy and playfulness and offers glimpses into the depths of the human spirit.

And closing out the season is **Alex Cuba** (May 24) — a Grammy-winning singer-songwriter who combines infectious Afro-Cuban rhythms with jazz, funk, rock and pop to create an unparalleled sound filled with soul-tinged hooks and catchy tempos.

Throughout each season, the **Student Series** is presented to thousands students who visit the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts to experience enter-

taining, professional and curriculum-related shows at an affordable cost. From theatre to professional dance to musicals from popular storybooks, the popular Student Series thrills and delights teens, families, school groups, homeschoolers and youth and community groups throughout Western North Carolina. The 2023-24 Student Series includes performances from Artrageous (Sept. 25), The Acting Company presents "The Odyssey" (Oct. 20), Parsons Dance (Jan. 26), Drum Tao (Feb. 14), Pilobolus (March 22), Step Afrika! (April 19), and Stewart/Owen Dance (May 9 & May 16). Special to the Student Series is Lightwire Theater presents The Adventures of Tortoise and Hare: The Next Generation (Oct. 6); and returning children's favorite TheaterWorksUSA with performances of DOT DOT DOT: A New Musical (Nov. 8 & 9) and Cat Kid Comic Club: The Musical (April 29 & 30). All Student Series reservations are being accepted now.

The Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, located at 18 Biltmore Ave. in downtown Asheville, is a three-venue performing arts complex, encompassing the 500-seat Diana Wortham Theatre, with its exceptional acoustics and sightlines, the 100-seat black box theater, Tina McGuire Theatre, and the multiuse Henry LaBrun Studio, designed for special events and workshops. Each year from fall through spring, the Wortham Center produces a season packed full of world-class, internationally renowned artists — presenting the best of the best in music, dance, theater, comedy and more. To obtain more information on the season or to purchase tickets, call the theater's box office at 828-257-4530 or visit worthamarts.org.