



CULTURAL SERIES 2023 – 2024

# BRINGING THE WORLD TO AIKEN



*Carolina  
Series*

Celebrating Women  
In the Arts



2023  
2024

*Thank you for helping make the Cultural Series possible!*



# A Word from the Executive Director

"If Art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him."

-President John F. Kennedy

Welcome to The Arts at the Etherredge Center for the 2023-2024 season! Following our vision this year, to take a cue from President Kennedy's words above, is leading us across the Palmetto State, to New York, Los Angeles, Japan, Austria, the Middle East, and more. For over 35 years, the Cultural Series has been leading the way as we meet our mission to "present, promote, and inspire cultural and intellectual opportunities for the benefit and enjoyment of individuals in the University of South Carolina Aiken community and the CSRA." Additionally, we are in our 5th year of presenting outstanding South Carolina artists with our Carolina Series, an initiative that we began in 2019 that has continued to grow and thrive.

With this year's Carolina Series, we are "Celebrating Women in the Arts," two of whom have been recognized as Emerging Artists by the South Carolina Arts Commission. January 27 brings Yuting Chen, a Columbia-based pianist, and the winner of the 2021 MTNA-Steinway Young Artist Piano Competition. On February 2 we have the opening gala and artist talk for sculptor Zeynep Gedikoglu; originally from Turkey, Zeynep now lives in Clemson, creating work that is based on how the body portrays feeling through movement. We finish our Carolina Series on March 15, with choreographer and dancer, Robyn Noelani Arnold. Trained in ballet, modern, and contemporary styles, Robyn has studied with the Cincinnati Ballet, the New York Dance Project, and Bounce! NYC.

As we embark upon the 38th year of our Cultural Series, we are proud that this year we are "Bringing the World to Aiken!" With a Sunday afternoon performance that will be perfect for the whole family, we begin with Japanese performer, Kuniko Yamamoto, whose storytelling uses myths from ancient and modern Japan, and who is an expert in the art of Origami. USC Aiken has proudly been ranked as one of the top-10 military friendly public universities, and we are focusing on our military and veterans with our October 17 performance of *Letters Home*, by the Griffin Theatre Company.

*Letters*, is a captivating and moving play created from actual letters written by soldiers stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq. On November 9, we continue bringing Grammy Award-Winning musical artists, with the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. Inducted into the Guitar Hall of Fame in 2021, the LAGQ have set the standard for guitar virtuosity for the past four decades.

Moving into the new year, on February 27, we travel across the Atlantic for the crown jewel in our season: The Vienna Boys Choir. Perhaps the most famous choir in the world, the Vienna Boys Choir has had almost 3000 choristers perform over 1000 tours in over 100 countries since 1924. We travel back across the pond, and even back in time on March 26, with the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus. Based in New York City, Bindlestiff's Variety Arts are dedicated to keeping alive the memory and traditions of circus, sideshow, and vaudeville. Staying in the "City That Never Sleeps," we finish our season on April 27 with the award-winning duo of Soprano, Louise Toppin and Baritone, Robert Sims, as they perform *Gershwin on Broadway*. Toppin and Sims have both performed at Carnegie Hall, and are brilliant interpreters of some of the most popular songs of the 20th Century ever performed on the Great White Way.

Now THAT'S a fantastic season! Before you read through this brochure to learn more about all of these amazing artists, let me take a moment to thank you for your patronage. The only reason that the Etherredge Center has been able to continue bringing incredible artists to Aiken for almost 40 years is because of the support of our patrons and audience members. Like I always say, we can't do what we do without you.

Thank you,



Paul B. Crook,  
Executive Director



# Magical Mask, Music and Mime of Japan

*Kuniko Yamamoto*

Sunday, September 10, 2023 | 2:00 p.m.

Kuniko Yamamoto enchants audiences of every age with dramatic storytelling using myths and fables from ancient and modern Japan, spiced with social revelations to educate and amuse. In *Magical Mask, Music and Mime of Japan* Kuniko uses traditional Japanese music, handcrafted masks, stylized movement and a touch of magic to create an artistic balance of illusion and reality. Every program encourages audience interaction and participation, with each narrative carefully selected for cultural and moral perspectives. Trained in dance and traditional arts in her native Osaka, Japan, Kuniko has lived in Florida since 1992.

Kuniko received national exposure performing Japanese Storytelling at the Silk Road International Exposition and on Kansai National TV in 1985. Over the last three decades she has presented her programs throughout the United

States. She received the Tempo Award from Origami USA in 2007. As a passionate origami artist and teacher, Kuniko opened Origami Air Art Studio in 2017.

Kuniko has performed at The Kennedy Center (Washington DC); Disney Epcot Japanese Pavilion; Seattle's International Children's Festival/Giant Magnet; International Children's Festival in Canada; National Storytelling Festival; LA Music Center /Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County and Pittsburgh International Children's Festival.



# Letters Home

## Griffin Theatre Company

Tuesday, October 17, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

### The Play

*Letters Home* puts the wars in Afghanistan & Iraq front and center by bringing to life actual letters written by soldiers serving in the Middle East. The play, without politicizing, gives audiences a powerful portrait of the soldier experience in our ongoing wars.

Although the play's title implies that all the letters are from soldiers, the piece includes a small number of correspondences from parents—their words being no less important. These letters were written under the most challenging circumstances; the disorientation of training, deployment, separation from family and loved ones, and combat and occupation duties in Afghanistan and Iraq. One theme seems to unite their diverse voices; the belief that the person standing beside you is more important than you are. They also help define for the audience—patriotism and what it means to serve our country today through acts of bravery, compassion, social responsibility, a sense of community, and brotherhood. Collectively, the production gives a voice to a generation that went to war against terror in Afghanistan and Iraq for reasons still being debated. More importantly, the play reveals the humanity within the war, as seen through the eyes of the men and women still fighting and dying in those wars today.

The production uses minimal props and set pieces to dramatize the letters. It employs images and video projected behind the actors as they perform the letters as dramatic monologues. The photos and video used in the production are taken directly from actual soldiers' blogs and websites.

### The Griffin Theatre Company

Over the last twenty-five years, the Griffin has provided a wide range of works, including world and mid-west premieres of acclaimed scripts, critically lauded productions of Shakespeare, and original adaptations of novels. Many of the Griffin's 100 plus productions have appeared on Chicago area critics' "Best of the Year" lists. The Griffin has received 46 Joseph Jefferson Award nominations for theatre excellence in Chicago and numerous other awards and citations for its work.





# Bach to Brasil

## *The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet*

Thursday, November 9, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

### Bach To Brasil

In 2023, the LAGQ welcomes newest member, Douglas Lora. Douglas' eclectic style and broad musical interests dovetail beautifully with the LAGQ tradition of embracing music from around the globe and across the centuries. The new formation of the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet will highlight Douglas with a program entitled "Bach to Brasil." Featuring some of their most popular pieces from the Telarc release "LAGQ: Brasil," it includes works by Jobim, Villa-Lobos, Clarice Assad and Hermeto Pascoal, as well as Douglas' composition Maracasalsa, presenting the traditional Brazilian dance maracatú in the form of a Baroque fugue. Rounding out the program, LAGQ will present a new arrangement of Samuel Taylor-Coleridge's *Danse Nègre*, works by Bach, Beethoven, Copland, and *Opals* by Australian composer Phillip Houghton, the feature track of their new release "Opalescent."

### The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet

For over four decades on the concert stage, the Grammy® Award-winning Los Angeles Guitar Quartet (LAGQ) has continually set the standard for expression and virtuosity among guitar ensembles, while perennially exploring new musical landscapes. The charismatic LAGQ is recognized as one of America's premier instrumental ensembles and consistently play to sold-out houses worldwide. Their critically acclaimed transcriptions of concert masterworks provide a fresh look at the music of the past, while their interpretations of works from the contemporary and world-music realms continually break new ground. Latin, African, Far East, Irish, Folk and American influenced works transport listeners around the world in a single concert experience.





# Vienna Boys Choir

Tuesday, February 27, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.

The Vienna Boys Choir is one of the most famous choirs in the world. Led by President and Artistic Director Professor Gerald Wirth, the Vienna Boys Choir is divided into four choirs and between them the choirs give around 300 concerts each year, attended by almost half a million spectators around the world. Since 1924, 2750 choristers have sung over 1000 tours in 100 different countries.

On Sundays, one of the Choirs performs with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the State Opera Chorus in Vienna's Imperial Chapel, as it has done for the past 524 years. They also appear at the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Concert and at the Salzburg Festival. The Choir performs with major orchestras, conducted by the likes of Joana Mallwitz, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Christian Thielemann, and Simone Young.

Boys have been singing at Vienna's Imperial Chapel at least since 1296. In 1498, Emperor Maximilian I. moved his court to Vienna to establish the Chapel Imperial there, and the Vienna Boys Choir. In 1924, the Choir was reestablished as a private, non-profit organization. In 2009, the Choir teamed up with the Vienna Konzerthaus and Caritas Vienna to found "Superar" to provide children around the city with access to music. Its singing tradition is listed by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage in Austria.

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# Bindlestiff Family Cirkus

Tuesday, March 26, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.

Celebrating two decades of keeping American traditional circus alive, the legendary Bindlestiff Family Cirkus brings its diverse roster of the world's finest circus, sideshow, vaudeville, and variety talent.

Since 1995, Bindlestiff Family Cirkus co-founders Stephanie Monseu and Keith Nelson have traveled the world, bringing a unique hybrid of vaudeville, circus and sideshow spectacle to theaters, clubs, colleges, and festivals. An evening of jugglers, acrobats, contortionists, plate spinning, sword swallowing, brain twisters and other risk-taking feats set to live music, combine to create an interactive evening of fun for the entire family.

Bindlestiff Family Cirkus harkens back to the heyday of the traditional American Circus touring the country by caravan while offering its own artistic twist.

It's earthy, gritty and celebrates the sideshow's odd novelty acts in an engaging and participatory way that you don't find in other types of circus.

*The New York Times* said the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus Cabaret is, "old-fashioned variety entertainment of the sort Ed Sullivan so astutely scooped up, but with twists," while *Time Out NY* exclaimed that, "this troupe of circus artists will remind your family what the circus is really about." Come one, come all and get your tickets now for the Cirkus!





# Gershwin on Broadway

Saturday, April 27, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.

America's longtime love affair with the music of George Gershwin, one of this country's favorite composers, is celebrated in high style. George Gershwin's music has become standard repertoire for musicians across the country and around the world. In the spirit of the celebration, baritone Robert Sims and soprano Louise Toppin present a sparkling program of the vocal and piano music of Gershwin, complete with classics like "Fascinatin' Rhythm," "Lady Be Good" and "Strike Up the Band." Have a sizzling 30's night and offer the songs of America's most popular composer played and sung by some of its finest performers.

Louise Toppin, finalist in the Munich International Competition and winner of the Metropolitan Opera regional auditions, has received critical acclaim for her operatic, orchestral, and oratorio performances in the United States, Czech Republic, Scotland, Japan, China, Uruguay, Sweden, the Caribbean, Bermuda, New Zealand, England, and Spain. She has appeared in recital and concert series: including Carnegie Hall (Weill Recital Hall), Lincoln Center, Merkin Hall, Llicieu Theatre in Barcelona, Spain and the International Albeniz Festival in Camprodon, Spain.

Robert Sims, Gold Medal winner of the American Traditions Competition, has been hailed by critics for his rich tone, energetic performances, and convincing stage presence. Robert has toured extensively throughout the United States, Germany, Austria and Switzerland as the featured soloist. He is the recipient of the Living Heritage Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award and the Friends of Negro Spirituals Heritage Keeper's Award. Mr. Sims is the donor of the Robert Sims Spiritual Prize for the George Shirley Vocal Competition. He is an alumnus of Oberlin Conservatory, SUNY Binghamton, Northwestern University, and Music Academy of the West.



# The Carolina Series: Celebrating Women in the Arts



*Yuting Chen*



*Zeynep Gedikoglu*



*Robyn Noelani Arnold*



# Yuting Chen

Saturday, January 27, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.

Yuting Chen, a pianist, is pursuing her doctoral degree in Piano Performance (DMA) at the University of South Carolina. Before this, Yuting earned her Master's in Piano Performance from the Mannes School of Music in New York.

Yuting has achieved remarkable success in international piano competitions. Her impressive accolades include:

- The At-Large Winner of the 2022-2023 Concerto-Aria Competition.
- Winning first place in the Charleston International Music Competition and the Audience Award.
- First Place Winner in the Red Maple Music Competition.

Additionally, she won first prize in the 2021 MTNA-Steinway Young Artist Piano

Competition in South Carolina, the 2017 Chopin Memorial Hong Kong International Piano Competition, and second place in the 5th KAWAI Asia Piano Competition. She also won the 2017 Austria Mozart International Piano Competition and the 2016 New York International Music Competition.

Besides her competition achievements, Yuting has performed as a soloist and presented Schumann's Piano Concerto with the University of South Carolina Symphony Orchestra. She also performs with the Orchestra Winds at the University of South Carolina. Moreover, she has participated in the piano master class of Marios Papadopoulos, founder of the Philharmonic Orchestra.



# Zeynep Gedikoglu

## *Gallery Opening Reception & Artist Presentation*

Friday, February 2, 2024 | 6:00 p.m.

Zeynep Gedikoglu is a sculptor and ceramic artist. She took an early interest in 3D arts but says it took lots of schooling, traveling, and life experience to discover what inspired her. "I create art with an amateur mind and soul. And I believe art should not be perfect, complex, or even relevant to all," Zeynep says.

Born in 1979 in Izmir, Turkey, Zeynep watched her mother paint throughout her childhood. Raised in Anatolia and Europe's rich cultural melting pot, historical artifacts have always amazed her.

As a woman and mother, Zeynep's art deals with issues of human nature, such as compassion, love, passion, struggle, bonding, pain, and belief. "My creation process is guided by the intention of recapturing moments to portray sentiments," says Zeynep. "My work is based on how the human body portrays feelings through displaying movement." Specialized in figurative sculpting, Zeynep prefers epoxy, clay, acrylic, and wax and often mixes mediums to give depth and texture to abstract figures. Her signature works mimic the natural characteristics of human nature.

Zeynep currently resides in South Carolina and travels at every opportunity to draw inspiration from nature, indigenous cultures, and history. She earned a Ph.D. from Clemson University and enjoys writing and sculpting.







# Robyn Noelani Arnold

Friday, March 15, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.

Robyn Noelani Arnold is a dancer, choreographer, and artist in upstate South Carolina. She creates and is interested in a diverse range of emotional contemporary movement. Her new works explore how to grow as humans through life and art. Robyn started dancing in utero and took her first ballet class at nine. She fell in love with ballet and the expressiveness of dance. Dance class gave Robyn a structured space to get out all of her twirls and moves and learn new forms of movement.

While in middle school and high school, Robyn's parents divorced. During this time, she discovered modern and contemporary dance and fell in love with techniques like Graham and Limone. In these classes, she also learned she could process her feelings through movement, which informs her passion for personal growth today. Robyn attended summer sessions at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Cincinnati Ballet, the New York Dance Project, and Bounce! in NYC. She learned from greats such as Roger C. Jeffrey, Svetlana Todinova, Tracy Vogt, Val Salnikov, and Vaughn Newman.

After a summer in NYC, she joined Vaughn Newman Dance (VND), located in Greenville, South Carolina, for their second season before

the world turned upside down, and the season was canceled due to Covid-19. In 2020, when Robyn couldn't dance, she rediscovered her love for movement and gained direction on what to do next.

In January 2021, Robyn moved to Central, SC, and joined VND again for their third season and second annual concert. "What a beautiful thing to be a part of and watch art inform change in our cities and personal lives." The concert contained works discussing the United States' current political and social climate, such as the preschool-to-prison pipeline, comfortable or uncomfortable environments, peace and unity, and "dry bones" coming back to life. Since then, Robyn choreographed and directed a dance film based on the five stages of grief (funded by the South Carolina Arts Commission), discovered a love for improvisational dance and finished her third season with VND in their concert "Concrete Roses." She is looking forward to new creative projects on the horizon.

# Streamlined Ticketing To Serve You Better

One difference you may notice in the brochure this year is the absence of a season ticket order form! We are excited about our new, simpler ticketing process, where we will use variable pricing for our events, in an effort to provide a better, more efficient process for you and for us.

Tickets for all of our events—Cultural Series and Carolina Series—will go on sale on August 2, and you can purchase them at our website [etherredgcenter.universitytickets.com](http://etherredgcenter.universitytickets.com), by calling our Box Office at (803) 641-3305, or by visiting us in person.

If you would like to make sure you get your favorite seats, then you might want to consider donating, in order to receive VIP ticketing options! Beginning July 19, VIP's will have a two week window to purchase tickets, prior to the on-sale date for the General Public.

Ticket pricing information is below, and on the following pages you can learn how to become a donor, to unlock your VIP ticket purchasing option.

## 2023 – 2024 Cultural Series Ticket Prices

SHOW	REGULAR ADULT	DISCOUNT LEVEL	CHILD/STUDENT
Vienna Boys Choir	\$75.00	\$70.00	\$5.00
LA Guitar Quartet	\$50.00	\$45.00	\$5.00
Gershwin on Broadway	\$35.00	\$30.00	\$5.00
Letters Home	\$35.00	\$30.00	\$5.00
Bindlestiff Family Cirkus	\$25.00	\$20.00	\$5.00
Kuniko Yamamoto	\$25.00	\$20.00	\$5.00

“Discount Level” includes Senior Citizens, Military, and USCA Faculty and Staff.

“Child/Student” price applies to K-12 as well as college students, and may be purchased in person with a valid student ID.

All Carolina Series event tickets are \$20 each.



## 2023 – 2024 Cultural Series Sponsorships

### Season Sponsor - \$20,000

One available - benefits applied to **all** shows. All benefits of a Producer Sponsor, plus:

- Exclusive recognition as Cultural Series season sponsor
- Ad/commercial on lobby television monitors
- Recognition in all ads
- Featured in the USC Aiken Magazine
- Eight tickets to 2023 USC Aiken holiday gala
- Eight tickets to all Cultural Series events
- Banner on Etherredge Center lawn
- Shout-out on all social media accounts

### Producer Sponsor - \$10,000

Benefits applied to **two** shows selected by sponsor. All benefits of a Star Sponsor, plus:

- Recognition as Producer Sponsor for two shows

### Star Sponsor - \$5,000

Benefits applied to **one** show selected by sponsor

- Recognition as Presenting Sponsor for one show
- Ad/commercial on lobby television monitors
- Recognition in all ads
- Logo and link to sponsor's website in digital playbill
- Full-page ad in digital playbill
- Presence on USC Aiken digital sign
- Four tickets to 2023 USC Aiken holiday gala

- Four tickets to sponsored Cultural Series event
- Invitation to Chancellor's Memorial Room pre-show reception
- Director's recognition from the stage
- Signage in Etherredge Center lobby
- Shout-out on all social media accounts

### Cast Sponsor - \$2,500

Benefits applied to **one** show selected by sponsor. All benefits of a Curtain Sponsor, plus:

- Recognition in all ads
- Two tickets to 2023 USC Aiken holiday gala

### Curtain Sponsor - \$1,000

Benefits applied to **one** show selected by sponsor

- Logo and link to sponsor's website in digital playbill
- Two tickets to sponsored Cultural Series event
- Invitation to Chancellor's Memorial Room pre-show reception
- Shout-out on all social media accounts

***ALL donors and sponsors unlock the VIP ticketing option on July 19, 2023!***

## Donation levels

Businesses and friends of the Etherredge Center may also support the Cultural Series through a tax-deductible gift at one of the following levels.

### Director (\$500 - \$999)

- All Actor and Designer benefits plus:  
Two tickets to 2023 USC Aiken holiday gala

### Designer (\$250 - \$499)

- All Actor benefits plus:  
Invitation to Chancellor's Memorial Room Pre-show reception for one show of donor's choice

### Actor (\$100 - \$249)

- Listing in the digital playbill for one year
- Lobby recognition sign for one year



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