

News From PASA

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Dance, Drama, Music and Circus Headline the PASA 24-25 Season PASA Heads to Three Venues with Six Sizzling Shows

Lafayette, LA: With an eye on innovative, spectacular talent, Performing Arts Serving Acadiana (PASA) rolls out its season with the classical ensemble OperaCréole, and pop-up performances in the historic theater at Baranco Elementary. The stunning Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble partners with the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, and the breath-taking Omnium Circus, round out the season, both at Lafayette's Heymann Performing Arts Center. All performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for all PASA events are available at the Heymann Center box office and online at www.heymanncenter.com.

The 24-25 PASA season offers a sweeping lineup that guarantees a rich array of performers—local to global—whose performances will surely bring laughs, gasps, cheers, and maybe a few tears. Six fantastic performances will take place in three venues, as PASA expands its reach through partnerships, and purposeful pursuit of new spaces and faces.

“Choosing artists to bring to our community is quite fun, but at the same time is very challenging. The hallmark of our mission is local access to great performing arts, so we look for performers and ensembles who would not likely appear here unless PASA brings them in,” says PASA Executive Director Jacqueline Lyle.

While the PASA series represents a diverse mix, from dance to jazz, from drama and R&B—yes, we're bringing in a circus, too—there is a common theme tying the programs together: a unique variety of live, innovative entertainment.

PASA breaks out with a new series we call Pop-ups at Baranco, where you'll see drama, R&B, and an interesting collaboration between Beausoleil's front man Michael Doucet, and John Warner Smith, a Louisiana poet laureate.

Opera returns to PASA's schedule on Saturday, September 28, when OperaCréole performs at Angelle Hall on the UL Campus, in partnership with the UL Concert Series.

This award-winning ensemble is led by the mother-daughter team of Givonna Joseph and Aria Mason, named Southerners of the Year by *Southern Living*, who have revived lost operas and other rarely performed works by free, nineteenth century New Orleanian composers of color. OperaCréole

performs these works in New Orleans—of course—and across the US and in Europe. The program for the evening, *"The Creole French Connection"* includes an array of opera scenes, arias, and Créole Folk Songs, by the composers Lucien Lambert, Edmond Dédé, and Camille Nickerson.

"If you've never been to an opera—by the way, attending one is way different from only listening to operatic recordings—don't let that keep you away," says Lyle. "Opera can be very romantic, dramatically tragic, or down-right funny. You won't miss a beat of this musical moment."

Angelle Hall is located at the corner of E. St. Mary Blvd and McKinley St.

The *New Yorker Magazine*, National Public Radio and *NBC Nightly News* have given their thumbs up to OperaCréole's fantastic entertainment. The production includes projections that provide instant translations of the libretto.

Nebu Nezey kicks off PASA's new Pop-ups at Baranco series on October 18. A spectacular performer who belts out blues, R&B, jazz and more in a high-energy show will electrify the theater at Baranco Elementary. Nebu Nezey, her backup band and singers put on a top-notch show, with covers of popular hits that audiences know and love.

There are about 400 seats in the Theater at Baranco, so PASA advises fans to order tickets early. The Theater at Baranco is located inside Baranco Elementary (formerly N.P. Moss Middle School), located at the intersection of Moss St. and Mudd Ave. in the Sterling Grove neighborhood.

"We hope you'll be there to help PASA usher in live entertainment to this relatively dormant venue that's tucked away in one of Lafayette's historic buildings," says Lyle.

The drama *Otto Frank* follows on the Pop-ups at Baranco lineup on November 14. Anne Frank's father Otto Frank was the only member of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust. Actor Roger Guenveur Smith performs this moving one-man show, portraying a father addressing his daughter beyond her time and his own, navigating his shattering loss.

Smith's credits range from the small screen (*A Different World*) to the big screen (*Malcolm X*, *Get on the Bus* and more), working with directors Spike Lee, Stephen Soderberg and other marquee names. He's quite a talent: he wrote, starred in and produced *A Huey P. Newton Story*, a one-man performance based on the life of Black Panther Party founder Huey P. Newton.

Otto Frank fits perfectly in the Theater at Baranco. Intimate in scale, this performance draws the audience in. As PASA Operations Director Maleah Bocage and board member Daniel Wiltz attest, Smith's performance of *Otto Frank* is a passionate portrayal that draws on the emotions of theatergoers and drama lovers.

PASA heads to the Heymann Center on January 29, 2025, when the legendary troupe Cleo Parker Robinson Dance opens the night with a palette of stirring modern dance. As the curtain rises on the second half of the program, the dancers join the prestigious New Orleans Jazz Orchestra for a breathtaking performance of "Sacred Spaces," inspired by the burning of three Black Churches in St. Landry Parish and the reconciliation and redemption of the congregations that followed.

This powerful combination of modern dance and exquisite jazz was originally envisioned by PASA Executive Director Jackie Lyle, who proposed the idea to Robinson and Rose. Sacred Spaces, which has now toured, combines dance, live music, and the spoken word, against a backdrop photography by acclaimed Louisianian Debbie Fleming Caffery.

Cleo Parker Robinson is one of the most important women in dance and Adonis Rose, artistic director of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, is making tracks around the globe. Robinson and Rose collaborated on every phase of this inspiring work.

PASA heads back to Baranco on February 20, 2025 when Beausoleil's front man Michael Doucet breaks out his fiddle and joins former Louisiana Poet Laureate John Warner Smith in this pair's first-ever collaboration of music and the spoken word. This Pop-up for a show that was dreamed up by PASA and its team of thinkers.

Doucet has been a fixture on stages large and small and near and far for more than fifty years. John Warner Smith has blazed trails through local government, the banking world, stretched his talents into poetry and writing, and is now the executive director of the Shadows-on-the-Teche in New Iberia, LA.

Omnium Circus brings its jaw-dropping, awe-inspiring and uplifting show, *I'm Possible*, to the Heymann Center on March 14, 2025. The troupe's gravity-defying aerial acts, mind-blowing contortion, unbelievable acrobatics, hysterical comedy, dazzling dancers and more make for a lively night of comprehensively inclusive and accessible fun. The NY Times calls Omnium Circus "Genuinely Extraordinary" and DC Metro declares it "Truly the circus of the future."

Omnium's expert performers are among the finest circus artists in the world and perform in a spectacular style that celebrates diversity, creates joy, and enriches people night after night, as it empathy will make this an unforgettable night.

Omnium Circus ensures everyone is in on the action in a spirited limit-defying and life-affirming spectacular with award winning artistry, memorable music, a heartwarming story and a host of performers representative of our population. The troupe thoroughly provides access for audiences of all ages and abilities.

Omnium founder and executive director Lisa Lewis began her career as a graduate of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College. With a Master's Degree in Clown/Circus History from NYU, she co-founded the Super Scientific Circus, and spent many years working with the Big Apple Circus in multiple capacities. Lisa founded Omnium Circus as a place where the magic of circus meets the power of inclusion. Much to the delight of "children of all ages"

"Omnium Circus is a perfect match for us because it ties directly to our accessibility initiative, PASAble," says PASA board president Tim Basden. "Its audio descriptions and integrated American Sign Language combine with our early seating, Quiet Zone, assisted listening devices, large print programs and other offerings that are available at every PASA performance."

In addition to the public performances, PASA will also stage four daytime performances for students, which are supported by a grant from Love Our Schools. The first daytime performance is at 10:30 a.m. on September 28 when OperaCréole performs for students in grades 6 – 12. In order to attend, school groups must register through the PASA office. Call PASA at 337-769-3231 or email info@pasaonline.org for more information or to receive a registration form.

PASA is committed to an inclusive theater and community experience for all of its patrons. The Heymann Center and other venues ADA compliant with accessible seating areas and a designated accessible entrance. Early seating is offered for those who need additional time to get to their seats and large print programs are available at all performances. Infra-red listening devices are available free-of-charge for those with low hearing at the Heymann Center lobby. Patrons with disabilities who have additional accessibility requests or who are in need of additional information are encouraged to contact the PASA office at 337-769-3231 or email info@pasaonline.org. The Heymann Center can be reached at 337-291-5540.

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About PASA: Performing Arts Serving Acadiana offers performing arts entertainment, focusing on dance, theater, and classical music, with occasional forays into other genres. PASA also delivers performing arts activities—master classes, workshops, lecture demonstrations and other offerings—in a variety of locations in the Acadiana area.

For more information about PASA or any of the performances, call PASA at (337) 769-3231 or email jackie@pasaonline.org.

PASA 2024-2025 Public Performance Dates:

September 28, 2024: OperaCréole. Angelle Hall on the UL Campus
October 18, 2024: Nebu Nezey. The Theater at Baranco Elementary. Corner of Moss St. & Mudd Ave.
November 14, 2024: Otto Frank. The Theater at Baranco Elementary. Corner of Moss St. & Mudd Ave.
January 29, 2025: Cleo Parker Robinson Dance & the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra Heymann Performing Arts Center.
February 20, 2025: Michael Doucet & John Warner Smith. The Theater at Baranco Elementary. Corner of Moss St. & Mudd Ave.
March 14, 2025: Omnium Circus. Heymann Performing Arts Center

All performances begin at 7:30 p.m.