



## NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 2, 2022

### **Penn Live Arts Opens 50th Anniversary Celebration Season with Community Open House and the Blind Boys of Alabama, September 16-17**

(Philadelphia – September 2, 2022) — [Penn Live Arts](#) kicks off its season-long 50th anniversary celebration with a [Community Open House](#) on **Friday, September 16** and **Saturday September 17**. The weekend will be headlined by legendary gospel group, the [Blind Boys of Alabama](#).

The festivities begin at 3:30 PM on Friday with a New Orleans-style second-line procession across the Penn campus, led by the **New Breed Brass Band**. Featured on Trombone Shorty's 2022 album, *Lifted*, and winners of New Orleans' "Best Emerging Artist" award, this young upstart band will bring serious NOLA cred to their first-ever Philadelphia appearances. [Penn Band Slam](#) follows at 4:00 PM on the Annenberg Center Outdoor Plaza, showcasing some of Penn's hottest student performers. New Breed Brass Band pulls out all the stops in a full performance in the Annenberg Center's Prince Theatre to close the evening.

On Saturday, families can take the ultimate behind-the-scenes tour through the Annenberg Center with Safari, a unique and interactive journey led by the much-loved performers of **Pilobolus**. Award-winning master storyteller **Charlotte Blake Alston** will captivate audiences of all ages with stories and songs from the African and African American oral traditions. National Dance Day will also be celebrated with all invited to participate in the official National Dance Day routine led by hip hop dancer, Virgil "Lil O" Gadson.

The afternoon also includes ticket specials, free snacks, a chance to check out the seats in the Zellerbach Theatre and hear Christopher Gruits, PLA's Executive & Artistic Director, talk about the upcoming season. Visit [PennLiveArts.org/OpenHouse](https://PennLiveArts.org/OpenHouse) for complete open house information.

Saturday evening, the new season officially begins as the five-time Grammy® Award-winning [Blind Boys of Alabama](#) take the Zellerbach Theatre stage for their Penn Live Arts debut. With a career that spans 70 years, Blind Boys of Alabama are recognized worldwide as living legends of gospel music. They've appeared on the "Tonight Show," "60 Minutes," and NPR's "Tiny Desk." They've performed at the White House for three presidents and in their home state of Alabama at the closing ceremonies of the 2022 World Games.

#### **About the 2022-23 Season**

Penn Live Arts continues the 50th anniversary celebration throughout the [2022-23 season](#). Delayed a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this major milestone will be commemorated in a year of world and Philadelphia premieres, local debuts, commissioned works and celebrated artists from around the globe. Penn Live Arts is

known for its renowned dance series, and the 2022-23 season stays true to tradition with 10 of the world's great dance companies and most talented choreographers. Rising star saxophonist [Lakecia Benjamin](#) serves as the Artistic Advisor for [Alice & John: A Coltrane Festival](#) (October 14-23), exploring the tremendous impact this iconic duo had on American music. PLA furthers its longstanding commitment to elevating Black storytelling in two significant residencies: the legendary [Negro Ensemble Company](#), featuring a one-act play festival and a world premiere theatrical work, and Philadelphia's renowned hip hop choreographer, [Rennie Harris](#). And, a new series, entitled [ListenHear](#), profiles important contemporary musical voices.

Subscriptions and single tickets, beginning at \$29, are available now. Visit [PennLiveArts.org](http://PennLiveArts.org) for details.

### **Penn Live Arts, Celebrating 50 Years**

Penn Live Arts (PLA), the leading presenter of innovative and transformative performing arts experiences in Philadelphia, celebrates the 50th anniversary of its home, the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, in the 2022-23 season. 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. Penn Live Arts' extensive history of commissioning and championing artists has fostered important creative work by theatre legend Hal Prince, new music composers Philip Glass and Steve Reich, boundary-pushing choreographers Paul Taylor, David Parsons and Moses Pendleton, jazz greats Hugh Masekela, Terrence Blanchard and Branford Marsalis, and many more. For younger audiences, the Student Discovery series offers weekday matinees and the annual Philadelphia Children's Festival, established in 1985 as the first event of its kind in the nation. 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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### **Calendar Listings**

#### **COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE**

**SEPTEMBER 16**

**These events are free. Visit [pennlivearts.org](http://pennlivearts.org) for information and reservations.**

**3:30 PM**

#### **New Breed Brass Band Parade**

The Community Open House kicks off with a New Orleans-style second-line procession across the Penn campus. All are invited to join in.

**4 PM**

#### **Penn Band Slam**

Enjoy performances by the Mask and Wig Band, Penn Glee Club Band and Bloomers Band, plus free food and ticket deals.

**7 PM**

#### **New Breed Brass Band Performance**

This Philadelphia debut brings the irresistible sounds of New Orleans to the Annenberg Center's Prince Theatre. Tickets are free, reservations requested. Seating is first come, first served.

**COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE**  
**SEPTEMBER 17**

**11 AM, 12 PM, 2:30 PM & 3:30 PM**

**Pilobolus Safari**

Take a unique and interactive trek through the Annenberg Center with the wildly creative and much-beloved performers of Pilobolus! **Timed reservations required.**

**12 PM & 2:30 PM**

**Charlotte Blake Alston**

This master storyteller captivates audiences of all ages with stories and songs from the African and African American oral traditions. Ticket reservation requested but seating is first come, first served.

**12:30 PM**

**Meet Your Seats & Chat with Chris**

Attendees are invited into the Zellerbach Theatre to find their seats, or check out the different options before making a seating choice. Christopher Gruits, PLA's Executive & Artistic Director, will also talk about the upcoming season and answer questions. Pre-registration requested.

**1:30 PM**

**National Dance Day Routine**

Celebrate dance with the official National Dance Day routine led by hip hop dancer, Virgil "Lil O" Gadson. Pre-registration requested but not required.

**SEASON OPENING HEADLINER**

**8 PM**

**Blind Boys of Alabama**

These gospel legends kick off the 50th Anniversary celebration season. Tickets start at \$29.

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