



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COCA ANNOUNCES 2017-2018 COCA PRESENTS SEASON

(ST. LOUIS, MO) – COCA is pleased to announce its 2017-2018 COCA Presents season, which will run from October 20 – July 28, 2018. Productions include the multiple Tony Award-winning musical *The Wiz*, guest directed by the Black Rep’s Ron Himes and COCA alumnus Will Bonfiglio in a one-man performance of the imaginative physical comedy *Balloonacy*. COCA will host the *American Ballet Theatre’s Studio Company*, showcasing the talent of the next generation, in its St. Louis premiere and *The Story Pirates* will bring the country’s best improvisers and musicians, recruited from the likes of Upright Citizens Brigade, Second City, and the Groundlings, to turn original stories from our own St. Louis students into wildly original sketch comedy musicals.

Nationally acclaimed guest choreographers, including Ron K. Brown, Artistic Director, and Arcell Cabuag, Associate Artistic Director, of *Evidence, a Dance Company*, and independent choreographers Darrell Grand Moultrie and Norbert de la Cruz III, will set work on COCA’s advanced student companies, Ballet Eclectica, COCAdance, and the COCA Hip-Hop Crew for the high-energy *Momentum* and the end of year repertory concert *TRLumphant*. An audience favorite, *The Little Dancer*, returns in a newly imagined production, featuring Ballet Eclectica and directed by COCA’s own Co-Artistic Directors of Dance Antonio and Kirven Douthit-Boyd.

Exhibitions in COCA’s Millstone Gallery include established and emerging local artists, rare and historic comic book art, architectural photography inspired by COCA’s iconic mid-century building, and *COCA in BLOOM*, a unique partnership with local students and garden clubs. COCA’s vocal companies are featured in a two-concert series, fall and spring. The season concludes with the American musical classic *West Side Story*, one of the most memorable and powerful musical dramas of our time.

American Ballet Theatre’s visit to St. Louis also includes a residency program and community outreach with *Project Plie*, ABT’s initiative to increase racial and ethnic representation in ballet and diversity American’s ballet companies.

COCA will also welcome celebrated dance companies from across the country during the 2018 season, as the host for the Regional Summer Intensive Auditions, January 12-14, 2018. Over the course of the weekend, RSIA brings over a dozen dance programs together to present a collaborative audition for participation in summer programs, attracting hundreds of students from throughout the region.

“We could not be more excited about this season. It is a joy and privilege to work with such talented artists and present opportunities for people young and old to directly engage with the magic of live theatre and dance performances and visual art exhibitions,” said Kelly Pollock, COCA Executive Director.

This season also marks the last in COCA’s Founder’s Theatre. After 30 years of theatre and dance performances held in the renovated sanctuary of the former B’nai Amoona Synagogue, following the *Momentum* cast’s final bow in January 2018, the next chapter of COCA Presents will start as construction begins on the facility renovation and expansion. *Create Our Future: A Campaign for COCA*, a \$40 million effort announced in January 2017, includes a new Performance Lab in the space that is now used as the Founder’s Theatre and a new state-of-the-art theatre as part of the expansion.

Subscriptions to the 2018 COCA Presents season are available for purchase now. Pick 4 subscription tickets start at \$56. Single tickets will be available starting August 30, 2017, with prices starting at \$7 a ticket.

ABOUT COCA:

COCA-Center of Creative Arts is the 4th largest non-profit community arts center in the country and one of only 16 accredited by ACPAS. With a mission to enrich lives and build community through the arts, COCA connects our community to the arts through programs that emphasize social and artistic diversity, economic and cultural accessibility, hands-on experience of the artistic process, and the highest quality in our faculty. Founded in 1986, COCA is a national leader in innovative community arts education. COCA annually serves more than 50,000 area residents of all ages through multidisciplinary, multi-cultural arts programs that include educational classes, camps and workshops, both on-site and in community venues; COCAbiz; COCAedu; COCA Presents; and exhibitions of contemporary art in the Millstone Gallery.

COCA PRESENTS SEASON SPONSORS:

The 2017- 2018 COCA Presents Season *is made possible* by Wells Fargo Advisors; *Show Sponsors:* Mary Strauss and PNC Arts Alive; *SchoolTime Sponsor:* Aetna; *Hotel Sponsor:* The Cheshire St. Louis; *Media Sponsor:* St. Louis Public Radio; *Series Sponsors:* Emerson, Mary Ranken Jordan and Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, and Missouri Arts Council; *COCA Core Supporters:* Regional Arts Commission, Boeing, Arts & Education Council, DeWitt & Caroline Van Evera Foundation, and Moneta Group; *COCA Pre-Professional Division Supporters:* Glassberg Family Foundation, Monsanto Fund, The Strive Fund, Twinkle Toes Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Bank of America, and E. Reuben and Gladys Flora Grant Charitable Trust.

WHAT: COCA Presents 2017-2018, made possible by Wells Fargo Advisors

WHERE: COCA, 524 Trinity Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63130, and various locations as noted.

WHEN: October 2017 – July 2018

PRICES: Subscription packages (Take 8, Pick 6 or 4) range from \$56 - \$134, and are currently on sale. Subscribe in person at COCA during box office hours, by phone at 314.561.4877 or online at <http://bit.ly/2v11qio>. Single tickets for all shows go on sale on August 30, 2017. All Millstone Gallery exhibitions are free and open to the public.

PHOTOS: High-resolution photos available at <http://www.cocastl.org/about/media-resources/>.

COCA PRESENTS PERFORMANCES:***The Wiz*****COCA Theatre Company with Director Ron Himes****OCT 20-22 | 2017** COCA Founders' Theatre

This beloved seven-time Tony Award winning musical features a dazzling mix of rock, gospel and soul music to create a refreshing update to a timeless classic. Artistic Director of The Black Rep, Ron Himes, joins COCA to direct Dorothy and her crew as they adventure through the Land of Oz in an upbeat, family-friendly, retelling of L. Frank Baum's "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." (2 hrs, with intermission)

AGES 5+***Balloonacy!*****A COCA Production Starring Award-Winning COCA Alum Will Bonfiglio****NOV 4-5 | 2017** COCA Founders' Theatre

A grownup discovers the fun, imagination and companionship of childhood with the help of a red balloon. This sensory friendly production packed with physical comedy, intended for young audiences, is a great introduction to live theatre. Written by Barry Kornhauser. (45 mins) **AGES 3+**

Joyful Concert**Allegro & Adagio****NOV 30 | 2017** COCA Founders' Theatre

Join us in celebrating the premiere of the original composition "Joyful" written for COCA's vocal ensemble by Colin Healey as part of a festive repertoire of musical theatre, pop, traditional and winter favorites from COCA's vocal companies (ages 11 to 18). (90 mins, with intermission) **AGES 3+**

The Little Dancer: La Muse**Ballet Eclectica****DEC 15-17 | 2017** COCA Founders' Theatre

After receiving a beautiful replica of French artist Edgar Degas' famous sculpture, *The Little Dancer of 14 Years*, for her birthday, our heroine Mary is transported back to the moment when the original was unveiled. Much to her surprise, it is ridiculed, prompting Degas to lock the sculpture in a closet never to be seen again! Mary rescues *The Little Dancer*, who comes to life, and together, they explore the streets and venues of Paris in this fanciful, newly imagined production. Presented by Mary Strauss. (60 mins.)

AGES 5+

Momentum

COCAdance & The COCA Hip-Hop Crew

JAN 26-28 | 2018 COCA Founders' Theatre

Featuring work by nationally acclaimed guest choreographers including Ron K. Brown, Artistic Director of Evidence, a Dance Company. A mix of cutting-edge hip-hop and contemporary dance across a broad range of styles brings members of COCAdance and the COCA Hip-Hop Crew together for a dynamic, can't-miss performance. (90 mins.) **AGES 5+**

The Story Pirates

National Touring Presentation

FEB 17-18 | 2018 Washington University's 560 Building

Story Pirates celebrates the words and ideas of young people, turning their original stories into wild sketch comedy musicals. Some of the best improvisers and musicians in the country, recruited from the Upright Citizens Brigade, Second City, the Groundlings, and more, bring to life the unfiltered world of kids' imaginations. When the curtain rises, cats can fly, hot dogs save the world, and characters are named things like Captain Waffles and Snufflepants. *Story Pirates* has reached more than 500,000 kids and performed in more than 350 venues, including two presidential Inaugurations! **AGES 4+**

American Ballet Theatre Studio Company

St. Louis Premiere – Limited Engagement

MAR 15-17 | 2018 Washington University's Edison Theatre

The American Ballet Theatre Studio Company (formerly ABT II) showcases the talent of the next generation of ballet's professionals. Principal dancers such as Misty Copeland and David Hallberg are among the over 60 of the current American Ballet Theatre ensemble who began their careers in the Studio Company. ABT's visit to St. Louis includes a residency program and community outreach with *Project Plié*, ABT's initiative to increase racial and ethnic representation in ballet and diversify America's ballet companies. Presented by PNC Arts Alive. (60 mins.) **AGES 5+**

Harmonious

Allegro & Adagio

MAY 3 | 2018 Westminster Christian Academy

Join us in celebrating the premiere of the original composition "Joyful" written for COCA's vocal ensemble by Colin Healey as part of a festive repertoire of musical theatre, pop, traditional and winter favorites from COCA's vocal companies (ages 11 to 18). (90 mins, with intermission) **AGES 5+**

TRIumphant

Ballet Eclectica, COCAdance & The COCA Hip-Hop Crew

MAY 11-13 | 2018 Washington University's Edison Theatre

Featuring powerful, playful and poignant choreography from internationally acclaimed artists, COCA's student dance companies conclude their seasons with this annual performance. (105 mins, with intermission) **AGES 5+**

West Side Story

COCA Summer Musical

JUL 27-28 | 2018 Washington University's Edison Theatre

West Side Story sets Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in 1950s New York City as the two star-crossed young lovers find themselves caught between warring street gangs. From the first notes to the final breath, their struggle to survive in a world of violence and prejudice remains one of the most memorable and powerful musical dramas of our time. Book by Arthur Laurents. Music by Leonard Bernstein, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Entire original production directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins. (2 hrs, with intermission) **AGES 8+**

MILLSTONE GALLERY EXHIBITIONS:

Artists Choose Artists

AUG 25–OCT 8 | 2017

Showcasing emerging St. Louis visual artists, this exhibition asks established St. Louis artists to invite and exhibit alongside local emerging artists. The exhibition is guest curated by Nancy Newman Rice, a St. Louis painter who has exhibited her work internationally. Rice recently retired from Maryville University, where she taught painting for 34 years and was the director of Studio Art **ALL AGES**

COCA in Bloom

OCT 18–21 | 2017

Inspired by works of art created by students from St. Louis' Hamilton Elementary School, members of the St. Louis and Ladue Garden Clubs design floral arrangements. The result: An inventive and inspiring cross-generational display of art and flowers. **AGES 8+**

Architecture in Focus

DEC 1, 2017–MAR 18 | 2018

COCA's historic mid-century, modernist building, designed by iconic architect Eric Mendelsohn, gets a closer look through architectural photography in COCA's Juried Student Show and Invitational. **ALL AGES**

Beyond Words: Comic Book Art

APR 6–MAY 27 | 2018

Celebrating a long tradition of word- and image-making, the exhibition includes woodcuts, engravings, comic strips and novels to consider the roles of image and narrative in our cultures. The works in *Beyond Words* are from the Rare Book Collection and the Comic Art Collection in the Division of Special Collections, Archives, and Rare Books at the University of Missouri Libraries. **ALL AGES**

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