

FALL ARTS



From enriching art exhibitions to pulse-pounding live music performances, the months ahead promise arts experiences that will please even the most discerning of connoisseurs. We've compiled a sampling of highly anticipated events in the areas of music, performance, museums, art and theater. Read on to plot your path through a season packed with can't-miss events.

WORDS

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PHOTO

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PREVIEW/2023

Bio Ritmo performs at Ember Music Hall

SPARKING NEW SOUND

Ember Music Hall opens its doors

A fledgling entertainment venue near Richmond's Jackson Ward neighborhood, Ember Music Hall has already featured a slew of artists during its first months of operation. The newest venture from event marketing company LX Group, the business also owns and operates pop-up bar Switch, Kabana Rooftop and several other local venues.

"We have about 90 shows booked between now and the end of the year," says event manager Jonathan Smith. "Pretty much every genre from rap and hip-hop [to] country, alternative rock and EDM [electronic dance music]." >

MUSIC



◀ Smith says EDM has been the primary focus due to the hall's distinctive audio-visual setup. "It's unlike any other venue in the city with how many LED screens we have and our custom speaker system," he says. "We're just really excited to give everybody something to look forward to this year."

LX initially began searching for a large venue space prior to the COVID-19 shutdowns. Once gatherings and events started to return, the group purchased two conjoined storefronts on East Broad Street. Knocking down the wall between them created a larger spot at 309 E. Broad St. that would become Ember.

Performances at the venue have included C.A.M.P.O.S. (pictured above). Upcoming shows through the end of 2023 include Lez Zeppelin, The Linda Ronstadt Experience, Elohim, War Hippies, The Warped Tour Band, Massane and more. See the full lineup at embermusichall.com.

Smith says Ember's audiovisual experience will be unique to the area, and they're planning to release new features by the end of September. "We're coming up with a completely custom series that we're doing that's pretty much unlike anything other than a Vegas or LA-style experience that we're really excited to unveil," he says.

MUSICAL ROOTS

The 2nd Street Festival celebrates 35 years

A celebration of the historic Jackson Ward neighborhood, the 2nd Street Festival is marking 35 years of bringing live music to the streets that once served as a cultural hub of the African American community. The free two-day event, Oct. 7-8 this year, draws thousands of attendees annually.

The Average White Band headlines the festival on Saturday, Oct. 7. The Scottish soul group ranks among the most sampled artists in the industry. On Sunday, Oct. 8, the event closes with "I Would Die 4U: A Musical Tribute to Prince" featuring local theater veteran Anthony Cosby Jr.

"When [the festival] first started, it was one block, one stage," says Sharon Bassard, events and booking manager for Venture Richmond, which organizes the festival. "Now, we're from Second Street to Broad, all the way down to Jackson. We have three stages, so it has really, really grown. We showcase R&B, some gospel as well as jazz."

Other features include a Kidz Zone; food, craft and art vendors; and classic cars on view courtesy of the Richmond Metropolitan Antique Car Club. For more information, visit venturerichmond.com.

TOP LEFT: ANDRE MAGS; BELOW LEFT: EVIL VINCE

MUSIC SAMPLE

SEPT. 29

Mixing different disciplines of rock with reggae, soul and numerous other genres, **Ben Harper & The Innocent Criminals** play *The National* at 8 p.m. \$52.50. thenationalva.com



SEPT. 30-OCT. 1

The Richmond Symphony kicks off its new season with two installments of **Mahler's First Symphony**, with performances on Saturday, Sept. 30, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 1, at 3 p.m. at the Dominion Energy Center. Tickets start at \$15. richmondsymphony.com

OCT. 7

Country artist **Dustin Lynch** closes out the After Hours at The Meadow Event Park 2023 season. 6:30 p.m. \$31 to \$99. afterhoursconcertseries.com

SECOND MOVEMENT

The Belvedere Series returns with an expanded chamber music season

Building momentum from its successful inaugural season, The Belvedere Series is returning with an extended schedule dedicated to providing approachable chamber music experiences in intimate settings around Richmond. “We sold out our whole first season really far in advance,” says series founder and artistic director Ingrid Keller. “We’re trying to expand into the community, and that’s why we’ve picked two larger venues.” The 2023-24 season includes performances at St. Christopher’s School and Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church.

“I curate really specifically themed chamber music programs, [both] stuff people have heard before and also [have] never heard before,” Keller says.

The series presents “The Roaring Twenties” from Nov. 11-12 at the historic Marburg House in the Byrd Park neighborhood. The performances will feature selections from Erich Korngold, the Austria-Hungary-born composer credited with pioneering the genre of grand film music. Beyond the 1920s, selections from the 1820s and 2020s will also be performed. The Nov. 11 presentation has sold out, but a waitlist is available.

A roster of local and international musicians will perform during the series. Grammy Award-winning violinist Domenic Salerni composed “Trio Elegiac,” the series’ first commissioned work, which will premiere during

the April 13-14, 2024, “Illumination” performances at the Marburg House. “That’s a special program because the center of it is an old Ukrainian hymn, and it’s the composer’s response to the ongoing war right now,” Keller says. “The first piece is just a Ukrainian composer solo cello, then the ‘Trio,’ and then we’re ending with Rachmaninoff. ... I wanted to see if we could bring everything together in that concert.”

For more information, visit belvedereseries.org.



RIGHT: COURTESY THE BELVEDERE SERIES; BELOW RIGHT: COURTESY JOHN LAPPEN

OCT. 7

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee and Byrds frontman **Roger McGuinn** stops at Hopewell’s Beacon Theatre. 7:45 p.m. \$42 to \$115. thebeacontheatreva.com

OCT. 31

Legendary Jethro Tull lead guitarist **Martin Barre** arrives at The Tin Pan on Halloween night both to perform music and take the audience through a narrative journey of his career. 8 p.m. \$55. tinpanrva.com



NOV. 15

Fresh off the release of their new album “Sight to Sound,” progressive metal band **Stellar Circuits** stops at The Camel. 8 p.m. \$12. thecamel.org

THEATER



PERFORMANCE DESTINATION

Broadway in Richmond brings five area premieres to the region

Since 2009, Broadway in Richmond has been bringing touring hit shows to Central Virginia, and the new season will feature the most area premieres to date. The 2023-24 season kicks off at the Altria Theater with “Disney’s Frozen” from Oct. 11-22. Based on the hit animated film, the musical blends recognizable songs from the movie (including the Academy Award-winning “Let It Go”) with new numbers created for the production. Additional area premieres include “Six,” a modern retelling of the lives of Henry VIII’s six wives, from Nov. 7-12; Aaron Sorkin’s acclaimed dramatic play of Harper Lee’s “To Kill a Mockingbird,” Feb. 27-March 3; “Tina: The Tina Turner Musical,” April 2-7; and “Beetlejuice,” based on the 1988 Tim Burton film, June 4-9.

“This is a testament to just how much Richmond is becoming a Broadway city, because producers want to play Richmond as soon as they get out on tour,” says Cindy Creasy, a spokesperson for Broadway in Richmond.

The family classic “Annie” returns to the Altria Theater with eight performances from Jan. 16-21. “Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical” will also return to Richmond just in time for the holidays with eight performances running Dec. 12-17. It’s available beyond the six-show main season for individual tickets and as an add-on for season subscribers. Season tickets are available starting at \$233 at broadwayinrichmond.com.

“There are shows literally for anybody and everybody and of all ages,” Creasy says. “We try to make sure we have a classic, we have something new, we have something exciting or edgy or fun, and this year certainly delivers.”

LEFT: COURTESY BROADWAY IN RICHMOND;
BELOW: COURTESY THE FIREHOUSE THEATRE

COMING TOGETHER

The Firehouse Theatre’s 30th season includes evolved programming

With a theater merger, new producing artistic director, original performance projects in the works and four resident arts companies added, big changes are afoot at Firehouse Theatre for its 30th anniversary season.

Firehouse has joined with The New Theatre, creating one company where

Mainstage productions and new play development will be produced under the banner of The New Theatre at Firehouse. Former Firehouse producing artistic director Joel Bassin retired in July, and former New Theatre executive artistic director



Nathaniel Shaw (*pictured left*) took the reins.

“Where I think Firehouse serves an absolutely essential role is providing the community an opportunity to discover [the] new: to discover new content, to discover new stories, to discover new voices,” Shaw says.

The 2023-24 Mainstage season opens with the Virginia premiere of “Berta,



CURTAIN CALL

Local theater productions offer a variety of experiences

From dramatic storytelling to comic farces, chances are there's a theater production available locally that will satisfy any appetite. Fall is an ideal time to start planning your entertainment schedule as the new seasons debut at theaters around the region.

After vacating their Henrico homebase, the **Chamberlayne Actors Theatre** (*cattheatre.com*) is taking a comedic approach to their 2023-24 season, dubbing it "A Season of Comedy" and taking on a playful temporary rebrand to Stray CAT, as the performances are hosted at venues around the area. The lineup kicks off with the Steve Martin play "Meteor Shower" at Brightpoint Community College from Sept. 16-29.

With four locations offering a packed programming roster, **Virginia Repertory Theatre's** new season (*va-rep.org*) includes musicals, plays, special events and collaborations. The Signature Season at the November Theatre debuts with the regional premiere of the Tony Award-nominated "POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive," which runs Sept. 1-Oct. 1.

Richmond Triangle Players' new season (*rtriangle.org*) sticks to its mission of presenting unique, thought-provoking productions. It opens with "One in Two," billed as "a defiantly embracing call to action," running Sept. 20-Oct. 14.

Berta" from Sept. 27-Oct. 15. Presented in collaboration with The Conciliation Project, the play follows Leroy, who, after committing a reprehensible crime, seeks to make amends with his former lover Berta. Two world-premiere performances follow, including "Memories of Overdevelopment," running Feb. 7-25, and "Roman à Clef" from May 8-26. For a full schedule of events, visit *firehouse theatre.org*.

This month, the theater stage is being named in honor of founder Carol Pier-

sol, who died in May from brain cancer. Shaw says a to-be-announced Pulitzer Prize-winning production from Piersol's early days with Firehouse will close out the season. The 5th Wall Theatre, which Piersol founded in 2013 following a falling out with the Firehouse's board, will be the first resident company of the 2023-24 season. It will be joined by three other resident arts groups, Yes, And! Theatrical Co., Starr Foster Dance and K Dance.

"It really is a time of great growth and expansion at Firehouse," Shaw says.

THEATER SPOTLIGHT

SEPT. 15-OCT. 1

The Henrico Theatre Company's production of "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," set during 1967, puts liberal sensibilities to the test when a white couple's daughter brings her Black fiancé home to meet them. The Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen. \$10. *artsglenallen.com*

OCT. 20-NOV. 12

Part of the Children's Season at the Virginia Rep Center for Arts and Education, "The Emperor's New Clothes" tells the story of an emperor who hires tailors to make him a remarkable set of clothes under the pretense that the garments will be invisible to anyone who is incompetent. \$TBA. *va-rep.org*

NOV. 15-DEC. 23

One of Richmond Triangle Players' biggest holiday hits returns with a production of "Scrooge in Rouge," a reimagining of the Charles Dickens classic "A Christmas Carol." \$TBA. *rtriangle.org*

NOV. 16-19

The University of Richmond's Department of Theatre & Dance presents the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama "Fairview." The play seemingly starts as a sitcom, following a Black middle-class family as they prepare for a birthday dinner, but evolves into a deeper examination of race and white supremacy. The performances are free, but reservations are required. *modlin.richmond.edu*

DEC. 7-17

The Weinstein JCC's Jewish Family Theatre presents the Tony Award-winning musical "Cabaret," which delves into the world of bohemian Berlin as Germany slowly yields to the emerging Third Reich. The production is recommended for ages 12 and up. \$30. *weinsteinjcc.org*

ABOVE: COURTESY VIRGINIA REPERTORY THEATRE

MUSEUMS

'WE'RE GETTING LASERS'

The Science Museum of Virginia expands

A big bang is frozen in space and time on the grounds of the Science Museum of Virginia. Walk around and inside this captured cataclysm to experience kaleidoscopic views of the world and yourself at this new art installation.

Created by artists Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee, co-founders of RE:site,

a Houston-based public art studio, the piece is titled "Cosmic Perception." The 25-foot-high, 33-foot-wide artwork built using 39,564 pounds of steel features 50 protruding white spires.

This is part of a phased improvement of the museum and grounds that recently included reclaiming 2 of 33 acres

devoted to surface parking for a landscape with native oaks, cypresses, cedars and willows, and meandering paths interspersed with public art including "Cosmic Perception." The goal is to allocate more than half of the 37-acre campus to green space. Construction of the next green space begins this fall.

In addition to permanent exhibits, check out "Wild Kratts: Creature Power!" which runs Sept. 23-Jan. 21. The traveling exhibition centers on brothers Chris and Martin Kratt's mixed live-action and animation program where they use a turtle-shaped boat to seek and defend wild creatures.

October brings the return of "Spooky Science," and November sees the Model Railroad Show roll in for the 46th time. December will be a holiday treat. For more details, visit smv.org.

"But the big thing is," museum spokesperson Jennifer Guild says, pausing for effect, "we're getting lasers." The 40-year-old planetarium dome is receiving a major systems upgrade to offer programs for laser entertainment shows. These improvements, slated to be completed this month, will complement the regular series of presentations and films. Think James Webb Space Telescope images blown up big as the sky.



"Cosmic Perception" at the Science Museum of Virginia

LEFT: JAY PAUL

AT THE MUSEUM

OCT. 5-MARCH 7

"Controversy/History," The Valentine's engagement with the present through the past continues into its 13th year. This season focuses on the Lost Cause narrative: 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Jan. 4, Feb. 1 and March 7. Free. thevalentine.org

OCT. 11

Edgar Allan Poe returns to Richmond, the town he considered home, in the person of performer Stephen Smith at The Poe Museum. Smith, of the Threedumb Theatre, presents a selection of Poe short stories in character in this installment of the museum's Illumination Series. \$12. poemuseum.org

OCT. 21-APRIL 28

During "Willie Anne Wright: Artist and Alchemist," the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts pays tribute to the versatile Richmond artist, presenting 70 of her photographs and eight paintings. The work travels between the playful and the ethereal. Free. vmfa.museum

BEARING WITNESS

Learn from the past at the Virginia Holocaust Museum

Recent improvements at the Virginia Holocaust Museum include a redesigned lobby, expected to open with a ceremony in October. With temporary walls in place, construction has continued and allowed guests to bypass the former front entrance and move into the first-floor exhibits. These present the events that led into the extermination of European Jewry in the 1930s and '40s, along

with the current dangers of intolerance for everyone. A new section includes an installation pertaining to the crematoria used in Nazi death camps.

The exhibition "Halt! Remembering the Holocaust" continues through Oct. 31 and features the artwork of Vermont-based artist and playwright G. Roy Levin (1931-2003).

Opening Oct. 1, "Memorial Without

Witness" is an original exhibit created by Tim Hensley, Virginia Holocaust Museum's director of collections, in collaboration with award-winning graphic designer Emily Park. The presentation concerns Auschwitz and the unique experience of Charles W. Sydnor Jr., the museum's senior historian and former executive director.

Admission to the Virginia Holocaust Museum is free, with a \$6 suggested donation. For more information, visit vaholocaust.org.

MORE THAN A MEMORY PALACE

The Valentine continues to evolve with Richmond's changing landscape

The Valentine is a major interpreter of Richmond and regional history. That role is undergoing extraordinary renewal through expansion and improvements at the 1015 E. Clay St. museum.

Following a similar makeover completed in 1930, acting director Laura Bragg, whose position was unusual for a woman at the time, dismissed the suggestion of museum president Granville Valentine for a delay in reopening because it wasn't yet completed. Her response: "A finished museum is a dead one."

The exhibition "An Unfinished Museum: 125 Years of The Valentine" is

on view through Sept. 2, 2024, in the lower level. It's a photo essay chronicling the institution's origin story and evolution.

The Valentine also houses the transplanted studio of the Wickham family artist and historian, Edward. His studio is receiving a massive makeover, slated for completion at year's end, that will include interactive interpretation alongside many of his creations.

The Valentine's workshop received famous persons — from playwright Oscar Wilde to Virginia-born President Woodrow Wilson and, in 1873, Jefferson Davis, the former Confederate president. Edward took the measurements of Davis used in a sculpture he made 30 years later. That figure, installed in 1907, was toppled in the summer of 2020 and in recent months the dented, spraypainted recumbent Davis became an exhibit.

For more information about exhibitions such as "Sign Spotting" (pictured left) and other offerings, visit thevalentine.org.



RIGHT: HARRY KOLLATZ JR.; BELOW: THE ESTATE OF ROBERT GIARD

NOV. 4

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture hosts its first "History Matters Symposium." The event includes panels and presentations on groundbreaking research into Virginia history around the theme of "Discovery." 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. \$75; \$38 for keynote and reception-only tickets. virginiahistory.org

THROUGH DEC. 8

At the University of Richmond's Harnett Museum of Art, "Queer Pioneers: LGBTQ+ History Through the Photographs of Robert Giard" features portraits of LGBTQ+ pioneering activists, writers and scholars. Free. museums.richmond.edu



THROUGH MAY 31

During "Sign Spotting" at The Valentine, antique images show Richmond's streets festooned with a plethora of classic signs that gave way to neon (including the Robin Inn sign above) and moving LED imagery. Included with museum admission (\$8 to \$10). thevalentine.org

PERFORMANCE



STAGE SELECTS

SEPT. 22-24

"*Carmina Burana*" is co-presented by the Richmond Ballet and Richmond Symphony at the Carpenter Theatre. Tickets start at \$25. richmondballet.com

OCT. 18

Tokyo-based dance company Sankai Juku brings their captivating visual presentation, "*KOSA – Between Two Mirrors*" to the Modlin Center for the Arts. 7:30 p.m. \$10 to \$50. modlin.richmond.edu

DEC. 9

Comedian Blaire Postman brings her "*Lady ADHD*" stand-up comedy experience to Coalition Theater. 9 p.m. \$15. rvacomedy.com

TAKING CENTER STAGE

Can't-miss dance and comedy presentations

Whether you're in search of inspiring movement or just hunting for a few laughs, there's plenty on tap in the coming months.

The new dance kid on the block is **Conflux Dance Theater** (confluxdancetheater.org), a Richmond-based, diversity-driven contemporary dance company founded in 2022 by Angelica Burgos and Miguel Perez. Their debut performance last spring, "Inception," sold out, and they're currently developing some small performances and a fall show at Virginia Commonwealth University's Grace Street Theater.

Karar Dance Company (karardancecompany.org) is bringing back their well-received "Informal" presentation at the Dominion Energy Center's Gottwald Playhouse, set for Oct. 7 at 2 and 7 p.m. Described as "dance in its purest form," there are no lights and no costumes.

The innovative and intriguing **Starr Foster Dance troupe** (starrfosterdance.org) will present "In Rest and Sleep," "Swallow," "Proof" and "Always a Way" during five performances at The Firehouse Theatre Nov. 30-Dec. 3. **K Dance** (kdance.org), will also

take the Firehouse stage for "Shorts" Dec. 8-10, featuring contemporary movement.

As the fall dance season concludes, two popular holiday classics return. **Richmond Ballet's** "The Nutcracker" (richmondballet.com) at the Carpenter Theatre runs Dec. 8-24. **Latin Ballet of Virginia's** "The Legend of the Poinsettia" (latinballet.com), comes to the Perkinson Center for the Arts and Education Jan. 5-9.

Those looking for comic relief will find a new group joining the short roster of Richmond comedy theaters and clubs. Founded by Rachel Garmon-Williams, **Bridge 9 Theater company's** motto is "connecting communities through laughter" (bridge9theater.com). Spreading the humor from the downtown Arts District to Short Pump, Bridge 9 (whose name is a nod to the eight bridges connecting Richmond) joins the city's growing improv community, which includes **CSz Richmond Theater** (cszrichmond.com) and **Coalition Theater** (rvacomedy.com). For a dose of stand-up comedy, check out the schedule at **Richmond's Funny Bone Comedy Club** (richmond.funnybone.com).

ABOVE: SARAH FERGUSON. COURTESY RICHMOND BALLET

CREATIVE PURSUITS

Discover enriching experiences at local galleries

With a world-renowned art museum, a contemporary exhibition space and numerous galleries supporting regional and local artists, Richmond is an aesthete's destination. Clear your calendar for the upcoming fall arts season to view multiple showcases around town.

From Nov. 3-4, **1708 Gallery** (1708gallery.org) brings the 16th "InLight" back to where it all began, the 200-400 blocks of West Broad Street. The cityscape has experienced many comings and goings since the illuminated art event first brightened the scene. This iteration of the invitational-curated, site-specific exhibition of multimedia works using light, sound, video and other artistic invention is appropriately titled "Reflection and Refraction."

Pertaining to reflections of another kind, at the **Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University** (icavcu.org), the exhibition "Morgan Bassichis: More Little Ditties," by the New York-based comedic entertainer and activist, is on display Sept. 8-Jan. 7. The pieces, created before and during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown, utilize performance, video and text. Among Bassichis' offerings is the installation "Quarrantunes," consisting of 26 one-minute videos on five screens accompanied by Bassichis' improvised songs. The tunes, the artist says, "fall somewhere between adult lullabies and practical spells, and will not include concrete policy recommendations but maybe they should?" Among two new works made for this exhibition is a young-adult anthology by 36 artists, activists, writers and rabbis, "Questions to Ask Before Your Bat Mitzvah," which reconfigures the rite of passage for everyone to consider assumptions about ritual, nationalism and community.

The past is brought forward at the **Virginia Museum of Fine Arts** (vmfa.museum) through "The Art of Advertisement: Art Nouveau Posters of the Late 19th Century," which runs until Jan. 21. This method of getting the word out crossed the lines between fine and applied art, and subsequent prints continue to brighten walls from dorms to homes. So, you've likely seen them but may not associate individual creators with the distinctive organic, flowing lines and patterns. Artists represented include Alphonse Mucha (who became a member of renowned French actress Sarah Bernhardt's street team), Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen (he of the much-reproduced "Chat Noir/The Black Cat" cabaret advertisement), Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (think John Leguizamo in "Moulin Rouge") and numerous others.

ART ON VIEW

SEPT. 29-NOV. 10

At its 401 Libbie Ave. space, Reynolds Gallery offers work by ceramicist **Laird Gough**. reynoldsgallery.com

NOV. 3-DEC. 16

"Think Small 12," Artspace gallery's biennial group show of big ideas in little art, features pieces that are a maximum of 4 inches in any dimension. artspacegallery.org

ONGOING

On the mezzanine of the Science Museum of Virginia is a curious collection of photographs made by scientists, "**BioArt: Finding Beauty in Research**," from a juried competition sponsored by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. Included with museum admission (\$10 to \$17). smv.org



1708 Gallery's "InLight" public exhibition

RIGHT: COURTESY 1708 GALLERY