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presents.
25I26 SEASON

Sphinx Virtuosi Randall Goosby, violin

Visions of Peace

SAT, FEB 21, 7:30 PM
Ramsey Concert Hall

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PROGRAM

JOSÉ WHITE LAFITTE (1836-1918) arr. Robert Debbaut
La Bella Cubana

CLARICE ASSAD (b. 1978)
Selections from *Impressions*
II. Fusion, Dança Brasileira
IV. Precision, Perpetual Motion

JESSIE MONTGOMERY (b. 1981)
Chemiluminescence†

WILLIAM GRANT STILL (1895-1978) arr. by Randall Goosby
Suite for Violin or Cello and String Orchestra†
I. African Dancer
II. Mother and Child
III. Gamin
Randall Goosby, Violin

INTERMISSION

QUENTON BLACHE (b. 2001)
*Visions of Peace***

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953), arr. Rubén Rengel
Piano Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83 “Stalingrad”*
I. Allegro inquieto
II. Andante caloroso
III. Precipitato

MANUEL PONCE (1882-1948), arr. by Rubén Rengel
Estrellita

Sphinx Virtuosi are represented by MKI Artists:
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* - Commissioned by the Sphinx Organization

** - Co-commissioned by the Sphinx Organization, Carnegie Hall, and the New World Symphony

† - Commissioned with a gift from the Keith and Renata Ward Emerging Composer Fund; co-commissioned by the Sphinx Organization and the New World Symphony

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SPHINX VIRTUOSI

VIOLIN 1

Alejandra Switala (Concertmaster)
Randall Goosby
Annelle Gregory
Sandro Leal-Santiesteban

VIOLIN 2

Caitlin Edwards (Principal)
Maithena Girault
Thierry de Lucas Neves
Patricia Quintero Garcia

VIOLA

Celia Hatton (Principal)
Robert Switala
Edwardo Rios
Luis Bellorín

CELLO

Eri Snowden Rodriguez (Principal)
Quenton Blache
Lindsey Sharpe
Kamila Dotta

BASS

Jonathan Colbert (Principal)
Christopher Johnson

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Ally Price
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PROGRAM NOTES

VISIONS OF PEACE

In a unique convergence of musical voices, *Visions of Peace* beckons us into a realm where music becomes an emissary of peace and unity. On this journey, we hope to lift every voice and remember our complex history while looking toward our shared journey toward a brighter tomorrow. We explore peace while remembering the conflict of past and present, and recognizing the repeated history and the resilience of the human spirit. From William Grant Still, celebrated as the “Dean of African American Composers,” to Jose White’s stirring Cuban melodies, every note resonates with our collective aspirations for harmony and understanding without borders.

This is a collection of new voices, those that have already shaped our canon and those that we hope will continue to be celebrated long after our time together. We reflect on themes of war, anguish, and loss through Ruben Rengel’s setting of Prokofiev’s “Stalingrad” Sonata. Jessie Montgomery’s music helps us transcend boundaries and borders, while our vision for shared humanity is brought together through Quenton Blache’s title composition.

La Bella Cubana

José White Lafitte (1836-1918), arr. Robert Debbaut

Afro-Cuban composer and violin virtuoso José White Lafitte embodied the spirit of cultural exchange in the 19th century. Born in Matanzas, Cuba, to a French father and Afro-Cuban mother, White rose to international acclaim after winning the 1856 First Grand Prize at the Paris Conservatory. He went on to direct the Imperial Conservatory in Rio de Janeiro and dazzled audiences across Europe and the Americas, performing on the famed 1737 “Swansong” Stradivari violin.

Among his many works, *La Bella Cubana* (“The Beautiful Cuban Woman”) has become one of his most beloved. Written as a habanera for two violins and piano, it blends elegance with the rhythmic vitality of Cuban dance traditions. In this string orchestra arrangement, lyrical melodies are shared throughout the ensemble, while the contrasting middle section bursts with syncopated energy.

White’s music offers more than beauty alone—it reflects the resilience of cultural identity, the grace of shared traditions, and

the possibility of harmony across borders. *La Bella Cubana* becomes not just a dance, but a vision of peace through sound.
— Bill Neri

Selections from *Impressions*

Clarice Assad (b. 1978)

Clarice Assad's intention was not merely to compose music but to create a vivid musical portrait celebrating the individuality, spirit, and unique flair of each musician within the New Century Chamber Orchestra, for whom this work was originally commissioned. The music reflects their first interactions with the composer herself.

The suite is full of intriguing vignettes, sounds, and sensory landscapes. We have chosen these selections that spoke especially poignantly to our program content and theme.

"Fusion: Dança Brasileira" transports listeners to the lively streets of Assad's Brazilian homeland, capturing its irresistible rhythms and celebratory essence. The composer integrates lively Brazilian rhythms—hints of *choro*, samba, and salon dances—with a string ensemble context, merging classical textures with the rhythmic vitality of her homeland. The Sphinx Virtuosi spent time in Brazil in 2022 and came away deeply inspired by the country's music and people. This choice is, in part, an homage as well as a celebration of the work itself.

"Perpetual Motion" presents numerous virtuosic opportunities for the ensemble to showcase its range. The upper strings drive a relentless moto-perpetuo rhythm, while the lower strings layer discrete melodic ideas that eventually converge in a brilliant mutual finale. We felt that the character of this fiery and exhilarating movement also reflects the ethos of the Sphinx Virtuosi: our commitment to unity and our collective perpetual quest for artistic excellence.

Impressions is a celebration of the vibrancy of sound, color, and spirit. On our journey toward peace, moving forward together as one, this music resonates with the constant resolve that this suite showcases in sound and form.—Afa S. Dworkin

Chemiluminescence

Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

"Chemiluminescence" is the scientific term to describe any chemical reaction that produces light from a non-light source,

such as a firefly rubbing its wings to produce a glow, or bioluminescence along ocean's edge, or the light produced from a cracked glow stick. The light produced can present varied qualities, such as infrared, visible, or ultraviolet.

As a composer, interpreting light sources and their resulting reflections and hues is an endless field of potential sound exploration. I used my impressions on this idea to create harmonies, colors, and blends I feel are unique to the string orchestra with its ability to bend and shift timbres in an instant.

The piece is in three distinct sections, each of which interprets light, agitation, reaction, and frenetic interplay in its orchestration. This piece represents my continued interest in finding a correlation between music and the natural world.—Jessie Montgomery

Suite for Violin or Cello and String Orchestra

William Grant Still (1895-1978), arr. Randall Goosby

William Grant Still was the first Black composer I ever came to know, and his music continues to bring a sense of identity and purpose to my work as a classical musician. Still's Suite for Violin and Piano is a powerful testament to the richness, resilience, and unwavering spirit of Black culture. Each movement was inspired by a sculpture created during the Harlem Renaissance, and each one depicts a unique facet of the Black experience. Looking back on how much this piece has meant to me in various stages of my life, I am deeply honored to have had the opportunity to arrange this incredible work for solo violin/cello and string orchestra.

The first movement is inspired by Richmond Barthé's sculpture, "African Dancer," through which Barthé aimed to portray the spirituality of our people. The movement begins with a powerful, unified declamation of power and presence, which quickly gives way to the rolling rhythms and accentuated steps of an African dance. Eventually, the dance shifts to a more mellow mood, marked by a soulful, singing melody in the solo part and swinging accompaniment in the orchestra. The dance then returns, vigorously carrying us through the end of the movement.

The second movement, "Mother and Child," is the heart and soul of this piece, and is inspired by the work of Black visual artist Sargent Johnson. The relationship between mother and child is integral to the experience of every human being who has ever lived. This was especially true for Sargent Johnson, who had lost both of his parents by the age of 15. Grant Still captured the

heartache of Sargent Johnson's experience, and yet still found a way to infuse the music with the tenderness of a loving mother, as well as the innocence of a child. The lyricism and sensitivity of this music always leaves me thinking of my mother, and all the love she poured into my siblings and me.

The final movement is derived from Augusta Savage's sculpture "Gamin," depicting a mischievous young boy (specifically, Savage's nephew, Ellis Ford) roaming the streets of Harlem. Grant Still, taking a page out of the book of blues and jazz, conjures up vivid imagery of a bustling city and a young boy taking it all in. There is so much joy and humor in this music, and I wanted to reflect that in the orchestra part. You will hear pops of pizzicato throughout the ensemble, as well as some jabs of call and response between the solo part and principal players that I hope will leave a smile on your face! —Randall Goosby

Visions of Peace

Quenton Blache (b. 2001)

"Study the past if you would define the future." — Confucius

This enigmatic counsel anchors the profound duality that pillars *Visions of Peace*.

The journey begins through a solitary voice's contemplation of our shared history, entreating us to reflect as the sage did millennia ago. Its melodious question ripples through the ensemble, burgeoning, until a hymn-like prayer, the heart of the work, comes forth. This anthem for a better world is heralded by serene harmonic slides in the double basses, hope and spirit made into sound. In accelerating bursts of vitality, Baroque-era motifs echo our past and oppose the lush, modal harmony of the prayer. This duality crests as the call is answered: A vision of peace materializes, utopian and exultant. As Blache reflects that peace is more mosaic than clear glass, the epilogue offers wishes of solace, and a final "amen" rings.

Quenton Blache is an African-American composer and cellist whose work has earned critical acclaim across the Americas, Europe, and Asia. Recent highlights include *Habari Gani*, a virtuosic miniature recorded by the Sphinx Virtuosi for Deutsche Grammophon, and *of wind and rain*, featured on Gautier Capuçon's Warner Classics release *Gaïa*. His prolific compositional output further extends beyond the concert stage to scoring numerous films and documentaries. A decorated performer, Blache has

appeared globally as a soloist and chamber musician, and can be heard on major film scores including *Moana 2* and *Sinners*, as well as live performances with artists ranging from WizKid and T-Pain to the 2025 Grammy Awards. He holds a master's degree in Screen Scoring from the University of Southern California, a minor in Chinese, and aspires to achieve the National Master title in chess. — Maïthéna Girault

Piano Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83 "Stalingrad"

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953). arr. Rubén Rengel

In the middle of World War II, the Soviet city of Stalingrad became the site of one of history's most brutal and decisive battles. It marked the furthest advance of Nazi forces into Soviet territory—and the moment when that tide began to turn. Bearing the name of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union's most powerful and polarizing leader, Stalingrad carried immense symbolic weight. By the time the Red Army emerged victorious in the winter of 1943, the city had come to embody not only resilience and sacrifice, but also the staggering human cost of war.

Sergei Prokofiev, one of the Soviet Union's most celebrated composers, was living through this same period of upheaval. Having returned permanently to the USSR in 1936 after years abroad, he navigated a complex role: a world-renowned artist whose music was both championed and scrutinized under the watchful eye of Soviet cultural authorities. Stalin's regime demanded that music uphold socialist ideals and be accessible to the masses; works deemed too formalist, dissonant, or Western-influenced, risked censorship or worse. Prokofiev's skill lay in balancing official expectations with his own fiercely individual voice—creating works that could satisfy the state while still speaking in his distinctive modern idiom.

During the war years, Prokofiev composed three piano sonatas —Nos. 6, 7, and 8—which later came to be known collectively as the "War Sonatas." The label was applied after the fact, but these works bear unmistakable traces of the times: jagged rhythms, violent contrasts, and moments of fragile lyricism, as if beauty and brutality were locked in a single, unbreakable embrace.

The Seventh Sonata, completed in 1942 and dedicated to the memory of Prokofiev's friends who had perished in the war, is perhaps the most harrowing of the three. Its opening movement bristles with anxiety and jagged energy, propelled forward by

asymmetric rhythms and an almost mechanical sense of inevitability. The central Andante caloroso offers a brief, aching reprieve—a vision of warmth and humanity—before the inale bursts in with relentless drive. Marked Precipitato, this final movement is a tour de force of propulsive rhythm and percussive power, often interpreted as both an expression of Soviet defiance and a musical embodiment of the chaos and urgency of wartime survival.

In this performance, violinist and arranger Rubén Rengel—a member of the Sphinx Organization’s extended family of artists—reimagines the sonata for an 18-member, self-conducted string orchestra. Rengel is no stranger to bold transformations: his previous arrangement of Beethoven’s “Bridgetower” Sonata (originally for violin and piano), which was recorded by Sphinx Virtuosi on its debut studio album, brought new symphonic depth to a cornerstone of the violin repertoire.

Presented under the theme Visions of Peace, this performance invites listeners to confront a paradox: how a work born of destruction and conflict can, decades later, serve as a reminder of resilience, solidarity, and the enduring human longing for peace. Prokofiev’s Seventh Sonata does not offer easy comfort—instead, it challenges us to listen to the sounds of war and imagine, all the more vividly, the peace that must follow.— Bill Neri

Estrellita

Manuel Ponce (1882-1948), arr. Rubén Rengel

Originally written as a song, *Estrellita* (“Little Star”) is one of the most beloved melodies by Mexican composer Manuel María Ponce (1882-1948). With its tender lyricism and unmistakable warmth, the piece has traveled far beyond its origins. The piece has been adapted for countless instruments and ensembles, and embraced as a quiet jewel of the Latin American repertoire.

At its heart, *Estrellita* is a song of longing: intimate, melodic, and emotionally direct. Its simplicity is deceptive; beneath the gentle surface lies a remarkable expressive depth, allowing performers to linger on phrasing, tone, and nuance. The melody unfolds as if sung, inviting listeners into a reflective, almost whispered musical moment.

This arrangement was created for us by Rubén Rengel, whose writing brings fresh color and sensitivity to Ponce’s iconic tune. Rubén’s familiarity with the Sphinx Familia shines here, where he

seamlessly threads the melody across the ensemble, giving each of us an opportunity to shine bright.— Bill Neri

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SPHINX VIRTUOSI

“A propulsive, richly hued interpretation ... which demonstrated the ensemble’s polish and tonal allure.” – *The New York Times*

Sphinx Virtuosi is a dynamic, self-conducted chamber orchestra and the flagship performing ensemble of the Sphinx Organization, the nation’s leading nonprofit dedicated to transforming the arts. Comprising 18 of the nation’s most accomplished professional string players, Sphinx Virtuosi is redefining classical music through artistic excellence, pioneering programming, and cultural leadership.

Recognized for their artistry and commanding presence, Sphinx Virtuosi has been praised by *The New York Times* as “top-notch... more essential at this moment than ever.” The *Strad* lauds their “elegant ascent into the upper ranks of string orchestras,” a testament to their growing influence in the field. With performances that captivate audiences nationwide, their annual Carnegie Hall appearance has become a celebrated highlight of the fall season. Their critically acclaimed debut album, *Songs for Our Times* (Deutsche Grammophon) was hailed as “a knockout” by *Gramophone*, which praised their “consistently polished and passionate performances.”

Members of Sphinx Virtuosi are sought-after soloists, chamber musicians, and faculty members at top institutions. They have performed with major American orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and the Philadelphia, Detroit, Atlanta, Seattle, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras. Beyond the concert stage, they are artist-citizens, leading impactful community initiatives and fostering deep engagement with audiences worldwide.

Sphinx Virtuosi has collaborated with legendary artists such as Terence Blanchard, Denyce Graves, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Damien Sneed, Will Liverman, J’Nai Bridges, Abel Selaocoe, and Davóne Tines. They have also worked with cultural icons like Beyoncé and Jay-Z, with high-profile appearances on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* and the Grammy Awards broadcast.

Learn more at www.sphinxmusic.org/sphinx-virtuosi.

RANDALL GOOSBY

"For me, personally, music has been a way to inspire others." Goosby's own words sum up perfectly his commitment to being an artist who makes a difference. Signed exclusively to Decca Classics in 2020 at the age of 24, American violinist Randall Goosby is acclaimed for the sensitivity and intensity of his musicianship alongside his determination to make music more inclusive and accessible, as well as bringing the music of under-represented composers to light. Goosby was recently appointed to Juilliard School's Preparatory Division and joined the Pre-College violin faculty in Fall 2025.

Highlights of Randall Goosby's 2025/26 season include debut performances with the Atlanta Symphony/Leonard Slatkin, Orchestre National de France/Cristian Măcelaru, KBS Symphony/Peter Oundjian, and San Diego Symphony/Kahchun Wong. Goosby returns to the San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, and New Jersey Symphony. He appears in recital across North America and Europe with pianist Zhu Wang as well as with the Renaissance Quartet, and joins clarinetist Anthony McGill and pianist Joshua Mhoo in a program presented by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.

Summer 2025 included Goosby's debut at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Marin Alsop performing Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3, and at the Verbier Festival, where he performed solo and chamber recitals. Goosby returns to the Cleveland Orchestra with Marie Jacquot, and joins the Music Academy of the West as a Mosher Guest Artist.

Previous engagements have included debut performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Sir Mark Elder, Minnesota Orchestra/Thomas Søndergård, National Arts Centre Orchestra/Alexander Shelley, Montreal Symphony Orchestra/Dalia Stasevska, and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic/Michele Mariotti. Goosby joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra on their 2024 U.S. tour led by Edward Gardner performing Barber's Violin Concerto. As of 2024/25, Goosby is a member of Konzerthaus Dortmund's series "Junge Wilde."

Goosby's debut album for Decca, entitled *Roots*, is a celebration of African-American music that explores its evolution from the spiritual to present-day compositions. Collaborating with pianist Zhu Wang, Goosby curated an album paying homage to the pioneering artists who paved the way for him and other artists of

color. It features three world premiere recordings of music written by African-American composer Florence Price, and includes works by William Grant Still and Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson plus a newly commissioned piece by acclaimed double bassist Xavier Foley, a fellow Sphinx Organization and Young Concert Artists alumnus. *Roots: Deluxe Edition* was released in spring 2024 and features new recordings of music by Carlos Simon, William Grant Still and Florence Price.

In spring 2023, Goosby's debut concerto album was released for Decca Classics together with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Philadelphia Orchestra performing violin concertos by Max Bruch and Price. Gramophone Magazine observed: "There's an honesty and modesty... This playing isn't dressed to impress but to express."

Goosby is deeply passionate about inspiring and serving others through education, social engagement and outreach activities. He has enjoyed working with non-profit organizations such as the Opportunity Music Project and Concerts in Motion in New York City, as well as participating in community engagement programs for schools, hospitals and assisted living facilities across the United States. Goosby collaborates frequently with the Iris Collective, an organization based in his hometown of Memphis, TN, which builds community through music education and creative engagement.

Goosby was the inaugural recipient of the 2024 Harmony for Change Award presented by Midori & Friends and also named the Cincinnati Symphony's 24/25 MAC Music Innovator, a season-long residency in which he curated and lead community engagement activities with young musicians, and at historic cultural sites throughout the city of Cincinnati.

Randall Goosby began studying violin at the age of 7, and made his solo debut with the Jacksonville Symphony at age 9. Four years later, he became the youngest First Prize winner of the Sphinx Competition at 13, leading to debut performances with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and New World Symphony the following year.

A former student of Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho, he received his Bachelors, Masters and Artist Diploma degrees from the Juilliard School. He is an alumnus of the Perlman Music Program and studied previously with Philippe Quint. He plays the Antonio Stradivarius, Cremona, "ex-Strauss," 1708 on generous loan from the Samsung Foundation of Culture.

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—*San Francisco Classical Voice*

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—*The Times*

Described as “phenomenal” (*The Times* of London) and “devastatingly beautiful” (*Gramophone*), the award-winning British choir Tenebrae is one of the world’s leading vocal ensembles. The choir has achieved international acclaim for its interpretations of choral works ranging from the Renaissance to contemporary masterpieces to commissions of new music.

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"Leonard Cohen's art and soul shine on in this stirring tribute."—*Telegraph*

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Dance Me is "a feast for the eyes and a delight to listen" (*Huffington Post*). Created from the timeless music and words of the late Leonard Cohen, it was approved by the Montréal-based poet, artist, and songwriter. It features "Hallelujah," "Suzanne," "First We Take Manhattan," and "Everybody Knows."

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Guest artists, programs, dates, times, ticket prices, and service fees subject to change.

BOX OFFICE

Open Monday-Friday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm and one hour prior to performances. Tickets to all performances presented by UGA Presents, Hugh Hodgson School of Music, Dept. of Dance, and UGA Theatre are available in person at the UGA Performing Arts Center (PAC) Box Office, by calling (706) 542-4400, or online at pac.uga.edu. Tickets purchased from other outlets cannot be guaranteed and may not be honored. For exchange/refund policy, visit pac.uga.edu/policies.

WILL CALL

Tickets purchased in advance and left for collection at "will call" will be available for pick up at the PAC Box Office during regular business hours or beginning one hour prior to the start of the performance, including off-site locations.

FEES

Georgia 8% sales tax and restoration fees (PAC events only) are included in all ticket prices. Additional service fees for online or phone orders and ticket delivery apply.

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Through an arrangement with UGA Parking Services, complimentary parking for all UGA Presents performances is available in both the PAC surface lot and the PAC parking deck. For performances at the Fine Arts Theatre, please use the Hull Street Deck, the Tate Center Parking Deck (payment required), or other UGA surface lots in the area. For questions regarding parking, please call UGA Parking Services at (706) 542-7275. For information about parking at The Classic Center, please visit classiccenter.com.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING

Unless noted otherwise, photography, video, and/or audio recording of any kind are strictly prohibited during all performances.

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Please silence all mobile phones and other noisemaking devices. Texting during performances is prohibited.

LATE SEATING

Late seating is subject to the discretion of the house manager. Late patrons may be reseated in an alternate location.

CHILDREN

Children ages 6 and older are welcome to attend all performances, unless indicated otherwise for specific events. Children under age 6 and babies will not be admitted. Parents and guardians are encouraged to exercise judgement when determining if programs are appropriate for their children. Please contact the box office at (706) 542-4400 with questions about specific performances.

ACCESSIBILITY

Venues are accessible to people using wheelchairs or with restricted mobility. Please contact the box office to make advance arrangements if you require special assistance. Accessible parking spaces are located near the entrance to the PAC lobby.

LARGE-PRINT PROGRAMS

Large-print programs are available by calling the box office at least 72 hours before the performance.

ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

For individuals requiring hearing assistance, the Performing Arts Center offers Assistive Listening Devices that may be checked out at no cost to patrons with a photo ID at the coat check desk in the Performing Arts Center lobby. The photo ID will be returned in exchange for the device at the conclusion of the performance.

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Concessions are available for purchase in the PAC lobby for all UGA Presents performances and other selected events. Food and drink are prohibited inside the performance venues. Complimentary cough lozenges are available at the coat check desk. Please do not unwrap lozenges during performances.

VOLUNTEERS

We appreciate the dedicated service of the many community volunteers who serve at the Performing Arts Center. To inquire about joining our team, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (706) 542-2634. Training sessions are held each August.

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Hodgson Concert Hall and Ramsey Concert Hall are available for rental. For information please call (706) 542-2290 or visit the rental page at pac.uga.edu/rentals. Rental inquiries for the Fine Arts Theatre should be directed to the UGA Dept. of Theatre and Film Studies.

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