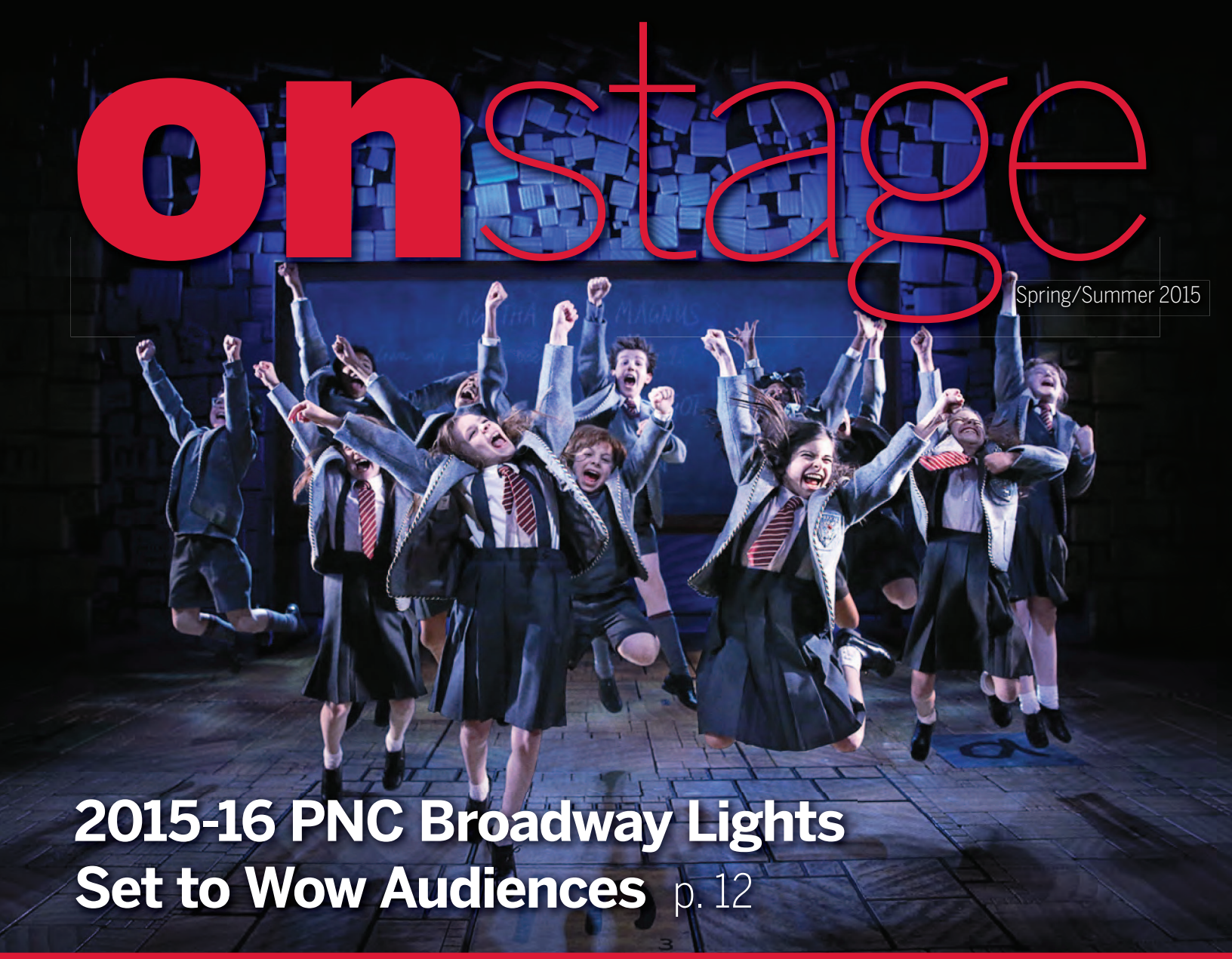
onstage

Spring/Summer 2015



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Get Ready 'Cause Here We Come p. 6

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Festival of Hip-hop Dance Theater p. 10

Blumenthal Performing Arts

KNIGHT THEATER
Levine Center for the Arts

BLUMENTHAL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
Belk Theater • Booth Playhouse
Stage Door Theater

SPIRIT SQUARE
McGlohon Theater
Duke Energy Theater

Camp Blumenthal: An Adventure in Imagination

Special programming for area Girl Scouts opens a new world of discovery and creativity through the wonder of theater

Phillis Cardwell, Girl Scout troop leader for Davidson area Brownie Troop 574, was thrilled to share the imaginative world of live Broadway Theater with 15 young ladies from her troop this past fall.

The girls, including Cardwell's 7-year-old daughter, Ava, spent an entire day at Camp Blumenthal – a very special program offered to area Girl Scouts that included a matinee performance of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*.

"Our girls just loved it," said Cardwell. "Exposing them to an entirely new cultural experience was very exciting for them. The opportunity to creatively play, receive special patches and meet other area scouts was something that captured their imagination."

Cardwell's troop was one of nine area troops in attendance. A total of 166 Daisies, Brownies and Juniors enjoyed the fun-packed event organized by Blumenthal's Wanita Latta, group sales manager.

"Camp Blumenthal is an opportunity for us to reach out in the community and share the magical experience that only live Broadway Theater can deliver," said Latta. "The program has evolved over the past few years with our kid-friendly productions. For *Cinderella*, we worked with the Girls Scouts to create a unique workshop that helped the girls work toward a special badge."

Girl Scouts participate in a *Cinderella* workshop.

"Playing the Past" was the theme for the day, and the workshop had the girls create their own "period character," create diary entries, wardrobe choices and even imagine what their daily lives would entail.

"Lunch and the performance followed the workshop," said Latta, "and as a special treat, we gave each girl a *Cinderella* and Blumenthal patch as keepsakes."

Latta noted that Blumenthal is planning a similar experience for the upcoming spectacular in July, *Annie*, and offers the camp experience to other groups, as well.

"We're working with a group of home-schooled kids for an upcoming performance," said Latta. "We're always thrilled to ignite kids' passion for the theater." ■

– Article by Michael J. Solender

Blumenthal Welcomes New Board of Trustees Members

The new year marked the approval of a few new members and positions for Blumenthal Performing Arts' board of trustees. In 2015, Blumenthal is excited to welcome the following new members:

- Kristin Hills Bradberry – chair-elect
- Jeff Hay – secretary
- Bobby Chesney and Barbara Meeks – trustees
- Ed Driggs – City Council appointee trustee
- Joy Pinchback and Steve Kinney – apprentice trustees

Bradberry will take over Rick Puckett's position as board chair in 2016. She will spend much of 2015 preparing for her future role and is excited to see how that preparation manifests.

"To have the opportunity to be in a leadership position with this organization is both humbling and stimulating. I have worked in the nonprofit arena my entire adult life, and I think Blumenthal operates in such an effective and powerful way that I'm eager to be closer to the organization and learn more," Bradberry said.

One of Bradberry's biggest draws to Blumenthal is the organization's commitment to bringing the arts to children who might otherwise not have access to them through Arts for All initiatives like ticket scholarships and formal partnerships.

The same goes for new trustee Meeks, who believes the arts should be a part of every child's life.

Kristen Hills Bradberry

Jeff Hay

Bobby Chesney

Barbara Meeks

Ed Driggs

Joy Pinchback

Steve Kinney

"I was fortunate to be raised in an environment where exposure to the arts was important and fostered a strong family bond. My parents saved from limited funds to afford piano and dance lessons and to bring us to musical and theatrical performances whenever possible," Meeks said. "I am drawn to Blumenthal because the arts are a critical part of who I am and I can't imagine my life without them. Blumenthal has a significant impact on our community as an attractive place to live and work, so it is critical to our future that we continue to build upon this success."

Hay, new board secretary, looks forward to the new way in which Blumenthal will be able to enrich the community in 2015 through the Sadler's Wells' Breakin' Convention event, sponsored by Sprite.

"It is in its 12th year in London and attracts hip-hop stars from all over the world," he said of Breakin' Convention. "The festival will only play at New York's Apollo Theater and in Charlotte this year, and the fact that Blumenthal can attract a show like this is a testament to the diversity of the arts community that we have in Charlotte."

The board of trustees oversees a complex business with six venues hosting hundreds of performances and thousands of events each year. ■

– Article by Diana Palka

Nurturing Cultural, Scientific Arts in Charlotte

Collaborative internship program designed to inspire future leaders

By Michael J. Solender

This summer, between 30 and 40 area high school and college students will experience a unique, behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to operate a major cultural or science organization.

Together with the Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and Discovery Place, Blumenthal Performing Arts is set to host the students in a newly developed, weeklong program called The North Tryon Cultural Collaborative, which is designed to expose them to the inner workings and potential career opportunities that exist in the nonprofit cultural arena.

"In developing this internship program," said Ralph Beck, director of education for Blumenthal Performing Arts, "we've established an overarching goal for interns to understand the intersection of and become lifelong ambassadors for literacy, history, STEM and the arts. A secondary goal is to engender in the interns a sense of pride in Charlotte's cultural and scientific community and a desire to return to Charlotte after college to live, work and invest here."

Discovery Week

Representatives from each participating organization are planning the following activities for the interns:

- a special day of on-site activities;
- discussions with senior staff members;
- briefings on their respective missions, visions and goals;
- facility tours; and
- functional overviews of key departments.

At Blumenthal, that means exposure to departments such as programming, accounting, box office, development, marketing, human resources, technical and volunteer services.

"We want our interns to see the world of possibilities that exist in operating these institutions," said Beck. "So much of what we do happens beyond the stage or exhibition space. There are a number of great opportunities, each requiring specialized skill sets. With this program, young adults from our area can see the possibilities and be inspired by the types of career paths available."

Beck noted that in addition to enjoying behind-the-scenes experiences, the interns will have plenty of opportunities for fun interaction and exchanging ideas with each other.

"There will be group meals and sessions where the interns will have the chance to share what they've experienced and learned from their peers," said Beck.

Charlotte Cultural Fellows

A smaller group of summer interns will have an opportunity to continue their learning experience through the Charlotte Cultural Fellowship. For this expanded six-week program, two interns from each of the four organizations will meet with civic and community leaders to discuss real-life cultural challenges facing our community and collaborate on viable solutions.

With a mission of raising social awareness of youth leadership and providing mutual benefit to Charlotte's cultural organizations and the community, these eight area young people will have a chance to make a lasting impact through their work.

"We're excited to share the possibilities," said Beck. "We want great talent to stay in the region." ■

A Clear Improvement

Blumenthal upgrades listening assist systems for guests

PHOTO BY JESSICA CLELAND

Blumenthal's new listening assist systems offer a theatergoers a discreet way to hear programs clearer.

Blumenthal Performing Arts welcomed an upgraded listening assist system for three of its flagship theaters at the start of 2015, and show fans are already noticing quite a difference.

"When patrons return to coat check to turn in the devices after a show, I see nothing but huge smiles on their faces," said longtime Blumenthal volunteer Cathey Winfield. "Not only can people hear the show without static or dropouts, but their own hearing aids will fit into the receivers, eliminating the need to use our headphones. This seems to be a huge hit among users!"

Devices are now available in Belk, Knight and McGlohon theaters. The upgraded technology provides an overall better user experience because it does not require a line of sight to the transmitter and, as a result, allows receivers and patrons to be positioned comfortably. Additionally, users are able to use personal headphones with the receiver to optimize comfort.

The new system provides vastly improved audio quality. According to Blumenthal Director of Front of House Operations Tommy Cantrell, the predecessor system had a lot of static for the user. Dialogue is clearer with the new technology, and a wider frequency response yields a more natural sound when listening to music.

"Several guests used the equipment for the very first time during *Newsies*," Cantrell said. "It was amazing to see their reaction. They could hear every word without static and expressed their gratitude for the upgrade. We are thrilled to be able to enhance the experience for all of our fans!"

Patrons looking to use the new listening assist system can access the devices by checking them out at the coat check in the Belk and Knight theaters. To access the devices at McGlohon Theater, ask the box office staff or an usher to locate the house manager. The service is free. ■

–Article by Diana Palka

Springboard for Collaboration

Cultural arts institutions explore creative ways to celebrate at Levine Center

Levine Center for the Arts has gained national recognition as a shiny gem in Charlotte's cultural crown. It more than delivered on the promise of an illuminating and diverse array of arts and cultural offerings upon its opening in 2010. Grouping the Mint Museum, the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture and Blumenthal Performing Arts' Knight Theater on the same campus has proven to be a winning combination for city residents and thousands of visitors who enjoy the variety of cultural offerings.

After an initial focus on operations and facilities, these organizations are working even more closely to up the ante, finding innovative ways to showcase arts and cultural events and happenings that build upon each other's strengths.

"We are just beginning to realize the full potential of this incredible site," said Blumenthal Performing Arts President and CEO Tom Gabbard. "The CEOs of the member institutions meet regularly to explore programming opportunities and ways that our respective audiences can enjoy broader exposure to events, artists and experiences."

Knight Theater is located at Levine Center for the Arts with other arts and cultural venues, which opens up the door for many diverse programming opportunities.

As an example, Gabbard shared plans for expanding on the Jazz Arts Initiative and Charlotte Jazz Festival launched last fall at Levine Center for the Arts. At the festival, jazzy fun was had by all, with educational programming, kids' events, local artist showcases and a variety of performances. Next April, Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra will headline a multiday festival with all manner of coordinated programming planned.

Dance Theatre of Harlem comes to the Levine Center through the partnership of the Gantt Center and Blumenthal. The Gantt Center will host a major exhibition on the history of the internationally acclaimed dance company. Knight Theater will be the hub for a week of performances and residency activities.

Breakin' Convention, an international festival of hip-hop dance theater scheduled for Oct. 9 and 10, is another showcase opportunity for the campus. Great artists from around the globe, and around the corner, will be featured. Visitors will experience graffiti art demonstrations, workshops and public performances over a weekend they will long remember. ■

– Article by Michael J. Solender