



2017 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY





Bobby Watson

THE FOLLY THEATER VISION

Enhancing Lives through the
Power of the Arts

THE FOLLY THEATER MISSION

To preserve Kansas City's oldest historic theater as a premier performance venue, we commit to maintain our building's heritage, diversify our program and entertainment offerings, and be an enthusiastic participant in the continuing revitalization of downtown Kansas City.



Dear Friends,

The Folly Theater has held a special place in people's hearts since it opened in 1900 as the premier burlesque and vaudeville house in Kansas City, hosting such greats as the Marx Brothers and Gypsy Rose Lee and being at the forefront of the expansion of downtown Kansas City.

After the Folly closed in 1974, civic leaders Joan Kent Dillon and William Deramus III had the foresight to save the theater and through their efforts and that of many other Kansas Citians, the Folly reopened in 1981 as the jewel of downtown Kansas City.

Originally designed by renowned architect, Louis Singleton Curtiss and opened in 1900, The Folly is a superbly conceived building for sights and sounds. Remarkable acoustics and intimate stage views are the hallmarks of that original design and today, enhanced with our state of the art sound system, no other theater gives the audience the sight and sound intimacy of a Folly performance.

Our mission is to sustain this historic theater as a vibrant and essential meeting place of ideas and arts experiences at the heart of Kansas City's creative crossroads; an elegant but comfortable place where diverse communities come together to experience world class art on a world class stage.

The Folly receives international acclaim as a performance venue, and high praise from artists and audiences alike, but it is the unforgettable, transformative experiences that give the Folly its unique vitality. Watch a thousand kids spellbound by touring children's theater actors one second and rollicking with laughter the next; be transported by a chamber quartet or concert pianist, or immerse your soul in the mellow harmonies and energizing rhapsodies of jazz. These life-changing moments allow imaginations to soar, expand horizons and perspectives and connect us through shared experiences and values.

In addition to the Folly's own Jazz Series, Kids' Series and Cyprus Avenue Live Series, our community partners such as Friends of Chamber Music, Heartland Men's Chorus, Harriman-Jewell Series, Ailey II and many more have long thrilled and mesmerized Folly audiences. New Partnerships with UMKC's Conservatory of Music and Dance, Crossroads Academy and the Kansas City Art Institute will inspire new generations to continue the cultural vibrancy that the Folly presents.

In appreciation of your support,

Gale Tallis
Executive Director
Folly Theater



THE FOLLY THEATER: "KANSAS CITY'S CARNEGIE HALL"

The Folly Theater boasts of some truly remarkable programming in our rich and storied history. In addition to the great names of the past including Al Jolson, Gypsy Rose Lee, Humphrey Bogart and Tempest Storm, the Folly Theater keeps its finger on the pulse of performing arts and has brought in some of the biggest "breaking" names to Kansas City. Rhiannon Giddens, Madeleine Peyroux, Sam Baker, the Steel Drivers, Rosanne Cash, and Kelley Hunt are just a few of the names to perform as part of Cyprus Avenue Live at the Folly Theater.

The Folly Jazz Series continues to bring the greatest names in jazz, from Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Brubeck and Lionel Hampton in the early years, to Pat Metheny, Karrin Allyson and Bobby Watson in current years, continuing the great jazz tradition at the Folly Theater.

We continue to receive praise for presenting new artists, such as Jon Batiste & Stay Human, Esperanza Spaulding and Cecile McLorin Salvant, and we work to play a role in ensuring that Kansas City remains one of the top jazz cities in the nation.

The diversity in music and performance does not end there; we have been the home to Ailey II since the 1980's, and regularly host the raucous productions of Late Night Theater. We are also home to the UMKC Conservatory's dance, jazz and wind ensembles as they prepare to make their move to downtown's vibrant arts scene. There is nothing more joyful than watching a young performer come into his or her own.

HEARTLAND MEN'S CHORUS

"The Folly has been HMC's performing home since 1994. We are honored to have the privilege to perform in such a beautiful and historic venue."

Rick Fisher
Executive Director for
Heartland Men's Chorus

FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

"Invariably, the artists say this is one of the best halls they've ever played in—in fact, Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society musicians, each one of them separately said, 'you have to go hear what it sounds like in the audience!'"

Cynthia Siebert
President, Founder and CEO of The Friends of Chamber Music Kansas City

UMKC CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

"The Folly is one of the Heartland's great concert halls. Founded in 1900, the hall is central to Kansas City's history and its future. Our performances in Kansas City's arts district are vital experiences for our students and points of pride for their families and teachers. We are honored to be a part of the Folly's season, and look forward to a rich partnership together in the decades to come."

Peter Witte, Dean
Conservatory of Music and Dance
at the University of Missouri-KC

AILEY II

"I have traveled the world and seen some of the best theaters in the world and I love, love, love the Folly Theater for its intimacy. The theater is designed like an opera house and provides a wonderful experience, especially for dance."

Tyrone Aiken
Chief Artistic Officer,
Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey

HARRIMAN-JEWELL SERIES

"The Harriman-Jewell Series has presented hundreds of performances at the Folly Theater since it reopened in 1981; the first was by the masterful pianist Murray Perahia. It is a favorite hall of world-renowned artists who appear there and of Kansas City audiences who time and again enjoy the Folly's intimacy and acoustical quality."

Clark Morris
Executive and Artistic Director,
Harriman-Jewell Series

THE "FOLLY EXPERIENCE" IS VIBRANT PROGRAMMING, INTIMATE SURROUNDINGS, EXCELLENT ACOUSTICS AND YOU!



FOLLY KIDS' SERIES

The Folly Kids' Series provides more than 7,000 Kansas City students each year with exposure to nationally touring productions in a historic theater. For some students, it is the first theater experience and we've received heartfelt thank you letters from students across Kansas City regarding their Folly Experience. The Folly Theater hosts the *Folly Frolic* each year to benefit the Folly Kids' Series. Proceeds subsidize transportation and ticket costs so area students can experience innovative, engaging and educational performances by top notch theater troupes.

CYPRUS AVENUE LIVE

Cyprus Avenue Live is a unique musical experience hosted by KCUR's Bill Shapiro. For many Kansas Citians, Bill Shapiro's voice is the voice of authority on great music and the Folly Theater is proud to have hosted music greats from Roger McGuinn (founding member of The Byrds) to the inimitable Sam Baker, to Rosanne Cash to songstress Rhiannon Giddens who brought the house down in her polka dot red dress and bare feet. These talents have all communicated their love of the intimacy of the theater as well as the astounding acoustics and we like to think it is these special qualities of the Grand Lady of 12th Street that will keep great talents and audiences alike returning to the Folly Theater again and again.



Rosanne Cash



Pat Metheny

FOLLY JAZZ SERIES

As Kansas City experiences its "jazz renaissance," the Folly Theater is proud to have been a mainstay for jazz since 1900 when the Grand Old Lady took her place on 12th Street. We were literally host to "The Jazz Singer," Al Jolson in the early years and continued to host the biggest names in jazz; locally, nationally, and internationally. From Earl Klugh to John Scofield to Bob James to Jon Batiste, a member of one of New Orleans "first families of jazz," the Folly Theater has held its finger on the pulse of jazz as evidenced by the introduction of some newer names in jazz—Cecile McLorin Salvant and Robert Glasper during the 2016-2017 season.



HARRIMAN-JEWELL SERIES

Now in its 53rd season, the Harriman-Jewell Series continues to carve out an enviable legacy as a performing arts presenter of international importance. *Discovery*, along with the co-tenets *quality* and *variety* are central values to the series and each season, free, discovery concerts at the Folly Theater are open to the public. These free discovery concerts that eliminate the barrier of cost, offer life-enriching opportunities for the Kansas City community youth and lifelong learners. These principles, set by the Series' late founder and artistic director Richard Harriman guide the Harriman Jewell Series' service to the community.

The Harriman-Jewell Series brings superior musicians to the Folly Theater stage each year. From the Sphinx Virtuosi, an acclaimed chamber orchestra that exemplifies how diversity is enriching classical music in America to the ever-popular mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, the Harriman Jewell Series brings exceptional performers from all over the globe and nearly 5,000 patrons to the Folly Theater for truly culturally enriching experiences.



HEARTLAND MEN'S CHORUS

Each year, the Heartland Men's Chorus brings more than 6,000 patrons to the Folly Theater and perform a varied repertoire of music, including jazz, Broadway, popular and classical works. Heartland Men's Chorus regularly performs with more than 150 singers, and presents a three-concert season on the Folly Theater stage.

In recent years, the Chorus has become known for its musical documentary format which uses music, narration and multi-media to illustrate social issues. Each performance is truly thoughtful and unique as evidenced by 2017's *Identify*. Part choral concert, part Ted Talk, *Identify* was developed to celebrate living lives of authenticity and the importance of "being you."



FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

Over the past 40 years, The Friends of Chamber Music has earned a reputation for excellence for its presentation of chamber music, and is considered to be one of the finest series of its kind in the country. Introducing new artists, new art forms, and new literature has been an integral part of their history and we are proud to play a part in that rich history.

Like many of our long term partners, the Friends of Chamber Music promote accessibility through affordable ticket prices that are priced at a fraction of the cost of tickets for the same artists on other major concert series across the country.



AILEY II

The mission of Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey (KCFAA) is making dance accessible to all people by presenting the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II, teaching young people critical life skills through dance, and modeling interracial and multi-cultural community partnerships. Since 1984, KCFAA's efforts have reached more than 1 million people in the Kansas City community and will continue to reach and positively impact people young and old far into the future.

Ailey II dancers have been performing on the Folly Theater stage since the early days of their inception in Kansas City and we are proud to welcome them back each year as they delight audiences with new as well as familiar choreography and emotion. It is common to hear patrons say, "Will they perform *Revelations*?" a piece that depicts the deepest grief as well as "holiest joy" in the human soul.

Photo Credit: Eduardo Patino NYC. Ailey II in Amy Hall's Virtues.

THE FOLLY THEATER: WELL INTO ITS SECOND CENTURY

Throughout its 116-year history, the Folly Theater has had several names and identities. During that time, the quality of entertainment presented on its stage has varied from high-caliber, highly respected artists such as Humphrey Bogart, Gregory Peck, James Earl Jones, Maya Angelou, Kevin Kline, Yo Yo Ma, Dizzy Gillespie, Rosemary Clooney, Sarah McLachlan, Patti LuPone and Phyllis Diller – among many others – to the more risqué performances of Gypsy Rose Lee, Mitzi, Sally Rand and Gene Laverne dating back to its burlesque days.



1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

19

Standard Theatre (September 1900-August 1901)

Opened in 1900 as a vaudeville and burlesque house, the theater on the corner of 12th and Central was a grand showpiece of Kansas City architect Louis Curtiss' work. The Standard was built by Colonel Edward Butler for \$250,000, complete with arched glass windows ensconced with light bulbs, majestic columns and Palladian windows. The Standard's audiences cheered for chorus lines of dancing girls, acrobatics, comedy, jugglers, songs, and vaudeville acts. Many marveled at the beauty of the building and the use of electric lights, which were introduced to Kansas City only the year before.



Century Theatre (August 1901-September 1923)

The Coates Opera House on the northwest corner of 10th and Broadway was the premier Kansas City entertainment venue for the final 30 years of the 19th century. On January 31, 1901 a fire was discovered and within hours the Coates was a shell. Before the flames were doused, a contract was negotiated to transfer all performances from the Coates to the Standard Theatre. Because of the switch to "legitimate" theater, the Standard's name changed to the Century Theatre for the 1901 season. On the afternoon of May 3, 1920, another fire was discovered under the balcony of the Century just moments before the curtain rose for the matinee performance. The front interior of the theater was damaged to the tune of \$25,000, as well as the wooden balconies and lobby. It would not be the final threat the theater would face.



Missouri Valley Special Collections,
Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.



Marx Brothers

Shubert's Missouri Theater (Sept. 1923-Sept. 1932)

The Shuberts, a prominent New York family that ran one of the largest theater conglomerates of the 20th century, acquired a lease on the Century Theatre. Renamed the Shubert's Missouri, commonly referenced as "the Missouri," it became an island of legitimacy in the midst of the chaos of 12th Street girlie shows and bars. Now presenting the works of Shakespeare and Eugene O'Neill, the theater was remodeled by Herbert Krapp, a prolific architect who designed numerous Broadway theaters. Five years later, however, the Shuberts sublet the theater to a burlesque troupe. On the Missouri's stage in 1929, Gypsy Rose Lee debuted her burlesque performance.



Restoration (1974-November 1981)

The theater's condition during the late '70s was grim: balcony steps were rickety, seats were ripped, curtains were torn, trash was throughout the interior, closets were full of Playboy magazines and nine-and-a-half tons of pigeon droppings rested in the attic. Despite this, Kansas Citians, led by theater expert Joan Kent Dillon and businessman William Deramus III, rallied around the decrepit theater. The Performing Arts Foundation of Kansas City, a dormant non-profit organization, was resurrected to generate operating and restoration income for the facility. The building was eventually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and numerous fundraisers took place around the city to raise money for restoration efforts. In the end, the venue was returned to a majestic state and re-opened as the Folly Theater in 1981 by a committee, chaired by newscaster Walter Cronkite.

60

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

The Depression Years (September 1932-1941)

The advent of the talkie in 1927 seriously impacted the popularity of live theater during the final years of the '20s. By the early 1930s, many venues could no longer afford to operate. Kansas City's Sam S. Shubert theater, the Missouri, the Garden Theater (originally the Hippodrome), the Mainstreet Theater and the Globe Theater were forced to close their doors. Only the Missouri was spared the wrecking ball. Afterward, the theater's name was sanded off and the facility stood empty. Nameless, the building was used for the occasional road show, including the Barnum and Bailey Circus.

Folly Burlesque (1941-1974)

After a decade of darkness, the theater re-opened in 1941 as Folly Burlesque. Shows featured well-known male comics, skits, a lead showgirl and of course, strippers. Over the years, the acts transitioned into adult films, which Folly Burlesque played until January 23, 1974, when she "died a quiet death." (Kansas City Star, January 24, 1974.) On that day, the theater closed its doors presumably for the last time. It was then sold to a New York property management company that intended to doze over the structure to make room for a parking lot that would serve the new convention center across the street.



Renovation to Present (1981-)

In 1981, with Walter Cronkite in the chairman's seat, the Folly Theater re-opened with an opening gala performance of "Room Service" featuring father and son team Eddie and Edward Albert, the father having starred in the original film with the Marx Brothers. The sounds of laughter, thunderous applause, and the clink of toasting glasses once again filled the Grand Lady of Twelfth Street. Through the years the Folly has become a community cornerstone, and the venue of choice among local presenting and producing organizations who bring the world's best classical music, jazz, dance, theater and entertainment to Kansas City, such as the Harriman-Jewell Series, Friends of Chamber Music Series, Heartland Men's Chorus, Ailey II Dance, KC Women's Chorus, and City in Motion Dance, and even an occasional burlesque performance, which harkens back to the Folly's vaudeville and burlesque past.



OUR SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN!

FEATURED VOLUNTEER—JOAN HUBBARD



Joan Hubbard has been a Folly Theater volunteer since 1983; the early years of the re-opening of the theater. Her devotion to the Folly and the people of Kansas City is evidenced by the roster of volunteers who Joan coordinates, many of whom, like Joan, have been with the Folly since the early 1980's.

Joan produces monthly calendars/newsletters, trains and schedules 20 teams comprised of 350 volunteers, and keeps track of the hours worked each year. In 2016 alone, Folly volunteers provided 7862 hours and superior customer service at 145 events. On an average show night, 18 ushers and concession workers are needed to ensure that the patrons have the best Folly "Experience" possible. The Folly volunteers pride themselves on their service to the Folly and to the community under the supervision of Joan's leadership. On a personal note, Joan is a proud Hoosier, Indy Racing fan, Chiefs and Royals fan and a past teacher, which also explains her passion for our Kids' Programs!

Many thanks to all of our volunteers who breathe life into the theater



THE FOLLY 2020 CAMPAIGN

We are launching an ambitious \$2.5 million integrated endowment and capital improvements campaign to secure the Folly's financial future and enhance the "Folly Experience" for all of our patrons, volunteers and artists. One of the most critical needs which this campaign will address is the theater's aging HVAC system. The current heating, ventilation and air conditioning system was installed in 1981, and major components are well beyond their serviceable life. This analog-controlled system is inefficient to operate, increasingly expensive

to maintain, and depends on a refrigerant which the EPA has recently begun phasing out. The projected cost to replace this system with state-of-the-art energy efficient technology, and to construct a climate-controlled storage room for the theater's grand pianos, is nearly \$900,000. Campaign funds will also be used to enhance essential theater spaces, seats and stage floor; upgrade sound and lighting equipment; and improve patron experiences.



*C. Stephen Metzler (1948-2015)
©2014 Kathy Disney*

FOLLY FOREVER FUND

To secure the Folly's financial future, the first-phase goal of the Folly 2020 Campaign is to raise \$1 million for the Folly's permanent endowment. The Folly Forever Fund will provide a solid financial foundation to support the theater's operational needs and enable programmatic expansion. Working with many of the Folly's individual donors and advocates, as well as leaders in the philanthropic community, we have secured commitments for more than 60% of our first-phase goal. Upon reaching this preliminary goal, the Folly performance hall will be christened the "C. Stephen Metzler Hall at the Folly Theater," in recognition of his 35-year legacy of advancing the Arts at the Folly.

C. STEPHEN METZLER: A LEGACY OF COMMITMENT TO THE FOLLY THEATER

Steve was among those who essentially "re-founded" the Folly in the 1980s. Joining a passionate group of civic leaders – including Bill Deramus, Joan Kent Dillon, Jeanette Nichols and others – Steve was part of a team that literally saved the Folly from the wrecking ball.

Steve's initial and monumental dedication was followed by 15 years of service on the Folly board and advisory board, with roles as treasurer, president and advisory board president. In the late 1980s, Steve led a second campaign to save the Folly – this time financially, by re-acquiring the outstanding bonds that had been sold to finance the renovation. Of course, Steve served the Folly in many other ways with his characteristic enthusiasm and high style. He chaired the "Folly Frolic" New Year's Eve parties from 1981-83, as well as the galas to celebrate the Theater's 90th and 100th anniversaries. He even led the "Light the Lights" gala in 2012, which funded the Folly's new marquee sign.

And Steve's commitment did not end there. Meeting Alvin Ailey and seeing his company dance at the Folly in 1983 inspired Steve to help form the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey. Steve co-chaired the first Ailey Gala at the Folly in 1984, and served as board chair for five years. That relationship continues today as Ailey II brings both diversity and the transformative power of dance to the Folly. It was also Steve's advocacy and influence that brought Heartland Men's Chorus – now a professionally-led, 150-voice strong choral powerhouse – to the Folly, its performance home for the past 22 years. Steve chaired the Chorus' first "Dinner of Note" benefit on the Folly stage in 1995. His legacy lives on.



Contact Folly Director of Development Brian Williams to discuss how you can add your voice to the chorus of Folly supporters through our current campaigns described at left or in the manner of your choosing!

CORPORATE DONOR PROFILES:

ENRICHING KANSAS CITY'S PERFORMING ARTS SCENE

DST SYSTEMS, INC.

DST Systems, Inc. has been one of the Folly's strongest corporate partners since the Theater re-opened in 1981. Providing significant financial support, volunteer leadership, and facilities support (including evening access to the 12th Street parking garage and sidewalk snow removal from around the theater), DST has been a great neighbor and advocate for the Folly. Among many other contributions, DST has sponsored numerous Folly events, rented the theater for corporate meetings, and generously provided recent funding for an independent market survey analysis for the Folly, designed to evaluate and provide strategic direction for the Folly's programming and marketing efforts. Current chair-elect of the Folly Board, Chris Benner, follows in the footsteps of a distinguished group of Folly board members affiliated with DST, including Joan Horan and Jim Laramy. Many other DST employees have contributed their time, talents and treasure to the successful operations of the Folly.

KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN

Kansas City Southern, like the Folly, has watched Kansas City grow, evolve and mature since the late 1800s - from a vibrant young network of commerce and culture on the plains to America's "creative crossroads." When the Folly was slated for demolition in the 1970s, KCS chairman Bill Deramus joined forces with Joan Kent Dillon to mobilize Kansas City's corporate, civic and arts community to save and restore this iconic cultural asset. Mr. Deramus chaired the Folly board for over 10 years, and devoted substantial personal and corporate resources, time, and energy toward revitalizing Kansas City's only remaining 19th Century theater. KSC has continued to provide invaluable leadership and support to the Folly over the past 35 years, including board representation from KCS officers Irv Hockaday, Dick Bruening, Joe Monello, and the Folly's current board treasurer, Michael Cline.

KISSICK CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC.

Kissick Construction Company, Inc. has been an exemplary corporate partner and patron of the Folly for the past decade, thanks to the passionately enthusiastic leadership and boundless energy of its co-founder and vice president, Pete Browne. Pete has served on the Folly board for the past seven years, including two years as board president. He is also chair of the board's facilities committee, and co-chair of the Folly 2020 Campaign. Kissick has been one of the leading underwriters of *Cyprus Avenue Live at the Folly!* for the past several years, as well as a leading sponsor of most of the Folly's principal fundraising events. They have focused on enhancement of the Folly experience, including renovation of the Lobby Bar, and supervising proposals for the Shareholders Room upgrade and HVAC system replacement. Pete Browne and Jim Kissick continue to serve as wonderful community partners for the Folly.



Rhiannon Giddens



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Standing (Left to Right):

Mark Eagleton - Citizen's Bank & Trust
 Mark Seely - Lockton Companies, LLC
 Chris Benner - DST Systems, Inc.
 Rosetta Robins - Strategic Management Solutions
 Rick Starks - Waddell & Reed
 Stewart Koesten - KHC Wealth Management
 Jim O'Sullivan - Valley View Financial Group Trust Company
 Stacy Purvis - First Federal Bank

Seated (Left to Right):

Alex Solorio - Solorio & Avila Law Firm, LLC
 Jayne Siemens - Venice Communications
 Pete Browne - Kissick Construction Company
 Lyla Perrodin - The Perrodin Group, LLC
 Edgar Palacios - Connections to Success

Out of Camera Range:

Michael Cline - Kansas City Southern
 Jeremy Lillig - Catholic Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph
 Doug Richards - B2i Ventures
 Sara Welch - Stinson Leonard Street

**ENHANCING
LIVES
THROUGH THE
POWER OF
THE ARTS**





Kelley Hunt



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Gale Tallis
Executive Director