

# Virginia Arts Festival Announces 2025 Season

The Virginia Arts Festival's 28th season will bring acclaimed, award-winning artists in virtually every performance genre to a spectacular spring. Collectively, these world-renowned artists have received scores of awards and accolades, including two Pulitzer Prizes for Music, three Kennedy Center Honors, three National Medal of the Arts, 66 Grammy Awards (with 153 nominations).

Virginia Arts Festival Robert W. Cross notes, "The virtuosity of these artists is stunning, from the seasoned artists whose names are household words to newcomers of extraordinary promise. We look forward to sharing these great performances with our communities in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Newport News, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg."

Here's a look at the spring 2025 Virginia Arts Festival:

## DANCE

Whether you're a lifelong dance fan or you've never before seen a dance performance, the Festival has got you covered this season, bringing blazingly innovative, spectacularly entertaining new works from legendary companies.

In a coup for the Festival and the region, Britain's famed Birmingham Royal Ballet will perform the U.S. Premiere of its headline-making new ballet, a spectacular tribute to some of Birmingham's most famous exports—Ozzy Osbourne and Black Sabbath. Combining the raw energy of rock with the strength and grace of ballet, Black Sabbath: The Ballet is spectacular entertainment, with eight classic Black Sabbath hits arranged for orchestra and rock band, and a live guitarist onstage with the dancers, and a pulsing light show frames the action. Three performances at Norfolk's Chrysler Hall, May 30-31.

## CLASSICAL MUSIC

Always a hub for great classical music, the Virginia Arts Festival brings unforgettable performances by iconic artists this season.

Renée Fleming is one of the most beloved and celebrated singers of our time; her sumptuous voice captivates audiences whether reaching devotees from the stage of the Metropolitan Opera or making new fans at the Super Bowl. To the 2025 Virginia Arts Festival Fleming brings a performance inspired by her GRAMMY® Award-winning album, *Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene*—a breathtaking exploration of humankind's evolving relationship with nature featuring music by Handel, Björk, Fauré, Puccini, and Jerome Kern, with a beautiful projected film created for the program by National Geographic. June 1 at Norfolk's Harrison Opera House.

Beyond his phenomenal career as a musician, cellist Yo-Yo Ma has used his artistry to bring people together around themes of kindness and tolerance. In *An Afternoon With Yo-Yo-Ma: Reflections in Words and Music*, the 19-time Grammy winner and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom pairs repertoire from the center of his musical firmament with reflections on how it has shaped his thinking about art, human nature, and our search for meaning. June 8 at Chrysler Hall.

A gifted actress with a gorgeous voice, she is as much at home on the opera stage as on Broadway—Kelli O'Hara has won millions of fans on television including *The Gilded Age*. Friday, May 16 at the Sandler Center, she joins famed Broadway music director Rob Fisher—the Festival's Goode Family Artistic Advisor for Musical Theater and American Songbook—and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra for a spellbinding evening of song, including Broadway favorites and more.

Mahler's Ninth Symphony is one of the most beloved works in the classical repertoire, a profoundly emotional experience that Virginia Symphony Orchestra Music Director Eric Jacobsen calls "one of the greatest accomplishments of humanity." The Virginia Arts Festival co-presents this masterwork with the VSO in performances in Newport News' Ferguson Center and Virginia Beach's Sandler Center, May 9 and 10.

Other highlights in the Festival's abundant classical music offerings include Britain's a cappella masters The Tallis Scholars, dubbed "the rock stars of Renaissance vocal music" by *The New York Times*, coming April 29; and acclaimed organist Alcée Chriss III, who will reveal the beauties of Norfolk's Christ & St. Luke's Episcopal Church organ May 11.

Alongside these established stars, the Festival will showcase the work of an astonishing young talent. Nineteen-year-old Alma Deutscher is an established composer and conductor who has already sold out Carnegie Hall—twice. Here Deutscher will lead a performance of her opera *Cinderella*, written when she was 12 years old; her version of the story has the Prince seeking the mysterious beauty from the ball not with a glass slipper but with the beginnings of a melody—which only Cinderella can complete. The performance will feature student performers from The Governor's School for the Arts Vocal & Instrumental Music Departments, and special student prices are available for \$10; at the Sandler Center March 15.

## CHAMBER MUSIC

The Virginia Arts Festival's chamber music programming, always a standout in the classical music season, has taken on new energy and thematic direction thanks to the star-powered leadership of the Festival's Connie and Marc Jacobson Director of Chamber Music Olga Kern and Composer in Residence Jessie Montgomery, a Grammy-winning star who was named Musical America's Composer of the Year in 2023.

Olga Kern, the first woman to ever win the coveted Van Cliburn Gold Medal, is a mesmerizing pianist whose knowledge of music is as deep as it is fascinating; her contributions to the Festival's Rachmaninoff 150 Celebration were among the highlight of the 2023 season. This season Kern celebrates Beethoven, curating a chamber music festival-within-the-Festival that offers enticing new ways to savor Beethoven classics, including his great chamber works but also transcriptions for chamber ensemble of symphonies and more. Kern will join acclaimed chamber artists including violinist Lana Trotovsšek, cellist Nina Kotova and pianist János Balázs in both evening performances and the Festival's beloved morning Coffee Concerts.

In other chamber music highlights, Kern will join the heralded Zemlinsky Quartet, making their Virginia Arts Festival debut May 21 at the Concert Hall at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg and May 22 in the Festival's Robin Hixon Theater.

In her second year as the Festival's Composer in Residence, Jessie Montgomery will curate a concert in which she will perform with the Virginia Arts Festival Chamber Players. Montgomery's rise to fame has been dramatic, with her works becoming a major part of the contemporary orchestral and chamber repertoire. As one critic put it, "she never fails to enthrall with her rhythmically complex, richly orchestrated, highly original pieces" (WTTW, Chicago PBS). Montgomery performs April 15 in the Robin Hixon Theater.

## JAZZ

Led by nine-time GRAMMY® winner and winner of the Pulitzer Prize and National Medal of the Arts Wynton Marsalis, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra is the emblem of jazz for the United States and the world—and a swingin' great time for audiences. In a unique collaboration, Jazz at Lincoln Center has joined with Virginia Arts Festival in nurturing the next generation of jazz musicians with a three-day residency that

features jazz ensembles from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The student winners of the adjudicated residency performances will open this concert, followed by their mentors from the greatest big band in the universe—the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. It all happens on April 11 at Chrysler Hall.

Hailed as the reincarnation of Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald in one spectacularly gifted voice, Samara Joy has seized the imagination of audiences, from seasoned jazz aficionados to enthusiastic young converts. At just 25, she already has three Grammy Awards including the 2023 Best New Artist and Best Jazz Vocal Album and the 2024 Best Jazz Performance. One performance only, June 7 in Chrysler Hall.

Virginia Arts Festival's Attucks Jazz Club has long been a mecca for players and fans alike; this season, once the Attucks Jazz Club wraps up, local jazz favorite, bassist Jimmy Masters curates the Towne Bank Jazz Series in the Sandler Center's Miller Studio Theatre. Among the artists who will perform are the scatting mezzo-soprano Lena Seikaly May 15, and crooner Sachal Vasandani June 19.

## MUSIC FOR EVERY TASTE

The Virginia Arts Festival's Perry Pavilion has brightened the concert scene in downtown Norfolk: just steps from Chrysler Hall and some of the city's most vibrant restaurants, this outdoor venue has hosted major artists. This season, the Perry Pavilion will welcome Puerto Rican dance band Plena Libre May 1; soulful roots/y'alternative singer-songwriter John Moreland May 4; and 18-time Grammy winner and banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck brings his newest genre-jumping adventure May 14, performing in trio with Colombian harpist Eimar Castañeda and celebrated drummer Antonio Sánchez, winner of five Grammys. The deep-roots tag team of Cajun slide guitar phenom Sonny Landreth and legendary New Orleans Latin-Americana rockers The Iguanas present a mind-blowing musical trip through the scenic soundscape of the bayou May 15. Americana/Folk trio The Wood Brothers returns to the Festival May 20. Blurring the lines between blues, soul, funk, roots rock, folk and bluegrass, Swamp Dogg will bring the house down at the Perry Pavilion lineup on May 29.

Virtuosity is key in the Festival's lineup, with the fabled Los Angeles Guitar Quartet lighting up the Norfolk Academy April 16; with a repertoire that ranges from Bach to bluegrass, this dazzlingly gifted ensemble plays to sold-out houses around the world, bringing "unrivaled joy, technical élan, and a questing spirit" (Los Angeles Times) to every performance.

The only bassist ever to be awarded the vaunted Avery Fisher Prize, Edgar Meyer is as versatile as he is talented; in his newest project, he joins classical violinist and Kentucky fiddler Tessa Lark and cellist/composer Joshua Roman in the Concert Hall at the College of William & Mary, May 7.

## VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL TATTOO

On the occasion of the 250th birthday of the United States Army, Navy and Marine Corps, the 2025 Virginia International Tattoo will throw a spectacular party showcasing an international cast of more than 800 civilian and military performers from nations around the world. With stirring music, heartfelt tributes to those who have served, and appearances by some very special guests, this Tattoo honors the service and sacrifice that make freedom possible. April 24-27 in Norfolk's Scope Arena; see the Festival website for a complete listing of pre-performance events along with the Norfolk NATO Festival happenings including the annual parade and more.

Tickets for these 2025 Virginia Arts Festival performances are on sale now, available online at [vafest.org](http://vafest.org), by phone at 757-281-2812, or at the Festival Ticket Office, 440 Bank St, Norfolk (Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm).

## Virginia Arts Festival Spring 2025 Season At A Glance

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA  
with WYNTON MARSALIS  
with Top Ensembles from the Jazz at Lincoln Center and Virginia Arts Festival  
HBCU Jazz Residency  
FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 7:30 PM  
CHRYSLER HALL, NORFOLK

JESSIE MONTGOMERY, violin & composer  
Virginia Arts Festival Chamber Players  
TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 7:30 PM  
ROBIN HIXON THEATER, CLAY & JAY BARR EDUCATION CENTER,  
NORFOLK

LOS ANGELES GUITAR QUARTET  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 7:30 PM  
NORFOLK ACADEMY, NORFOLK

VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL TATTOO  
THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 7:30 PM  
FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 7:30 PM  
SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 7:30 PM  
SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2:30 PM  
SCOPE ARENA, NORFOLK

THE TALLIS SCHOLARS  
TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 7:30 PM  
CHRIST & ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NORFOLK

PLENA LIBRE  
THURSDAY, MAY 1, 7:30 PM  
PERRY PAVILION

JOHN MORELAND, singer-songwriter  
SUNDAY, MAY 4, 7:30 PM  
PERRY PAVILION, NORFOLK

EDGAR MEYER, double bass;  
TESSA LARK, violin;  
JOSHUA ROMAN, cello  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 7:30 PM  
CONCERT HALL AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY,  
WILLIAMSBURG

MAHLER SYMPHONY NO. 9  
Virginia Symphony Orchestra  
Eric Jacobsen, conductor  
FRIDAY, MAY 9, 7:30 PM  
FERGUSON CENTER FOR THE ARTS, NEWPORT NEWS  
SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2:30 PM  
SANDLER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, VIRGINIA BEACH

ALCÉE CHRISS III, organ  
CHRIST & ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NORFOLK  
SUNDAY, MAY 11, 4 PM

PUNCH BROTHERS  
TUESDAY, MAY 13, 7:30 PM  
SANDLER CENTER, VIRGINIA BEACH

BÉLA FLECK, EDMAR CASTAÑEDA and ANTONIO SÁNCHEZ TRIO  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 7:30 PM  
PERRY PAVILION, NORFOLK

LOUISIANA CALLING WITH THE SONNY LANDRETH BAND AND THE IGUANAS  
THURSDAY, MAY 15, 7:30 PM  
PERRY PAVILION

TOWNE BANK JAZZ SERIES WITH JIMMY MASTERS  
LENA SEIKALY, vocalist  
THURSDAY, MAY 15, 7:30 PM  
MILLER STUDIO THEATRE, SANDLER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, VIRGINIA BEACH

KELLI O'HARA  
FRIDAY, MAY 16, 7:30 PM  
SANDLER CENTER, VIRGINIA BEACH

THE WOOD BROTHERS  
TUESDAY, MAY 20, 7:30 PM  
PERRY PAVILION, NORFOLK

ZEMLINSKY QUARTET  
OLGA KERN, piano  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 7:30 PM  
CONCERT HALL AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY,  
WILLIAMSBURG  
THURSDAY, MAY 22, 7:30 PM  
ROBIN HIXON THEATER, CLAY & JAY BARR EDUCATION CENTER,  
NORFOLK

COFFEE CONCERT I:  
ZEMLINSKY QUARTET; OLGA KERN, piano  
FRIDAY, MAY 23, 10:30 AM  
MILLER STUDIO THEATRE, SANDLER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, VIRGINIA BEACH

SWAMP DOGG  
THURSDAY, MAY 29, 7:30 PM  
PERRY PAVILION, NORFOLK

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET  
Black Sabbath — The Ballet  
with Virginia Symphony Orchestra  
FRIDAY, MAY 30, 7:30 PM  
SATURDAY, MAY 31, 2 PM & 7:30 PM  
CHRYSLER HALL, NORFOLK

RENÉE FLEMING, soprano  
Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene  
SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 3 PM  
HARRISON OPERA HOUSE, NORFOLK

COFFEE CONCERT II:  
LANA TROTOVŠEK, violin; NINA KOTOVA, cello  
JÁNOS BALÁZS, piano; OLGA KERN, piano  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 10:30 AM  
MILLER STUDIO THEATRE, SANDLER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, VIRGINIA BEACH

COFFEE CONCERT III:  
LANA TROTOVŠEK, violin  
NINA KOTOVA, cello  
OLGA KERN, piano  
THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 10:30 AM  
CONCERT HALL AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY,  
WILLIAMSBURG

AN AFTERNOON WITH YO-YO MA  
Reflections in Words and Music  
SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 3 PM  
CHRYSLER HALL, NORFOLK

LANA TROTOVŠEK, violin;  
NINA KOTOVA, cello;  
JÁNOS BALÁZS, piano; OLGA KERN, piano  
FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 7:30 PM  
ROBIN HIXON THEATER, CLAY & JAY BARR EDUCATION CENTER,  
NORFOLK

SAMARA JOY  
SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 7:30 PM  
CHRYSLER HALL, NORFOLK

OLGA KERN, piano  
VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL CHAMBER PLAYERS  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 7:30 PM  
ROBIN HIXON THEATER, CLAY & JAY BARR EDUCATION CENTER,  
NORFOLK

COFFEE CONCERT IV:  
VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL CHAMBER PLAYERS  
THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 10:30 AM  
ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, PORTSMOUTH

COFFEE CONCERT V:  
OLGA KERN, piano  
VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL CHAMBER PLAYERS  
FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 10:30 AM  
TOWNE UNIVERSITY, SUFFOLK

TOWNE BANK JAZZ SERIES WITH JIMMY MASTERS  
SACHAL VASANDANI, vocalist  
THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 7:30 PM  
MILLER STUDIO THEATRE, SANDLER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, VIRGINIA BEACH

About Virginia Arts Festival