



Welcome back, Deacs!

It is always wonderful to kick off a new academic year, greeting incoming students and welcoming home familiar faces. My Wake the Arts colleagues and I have been busy at orientation events, spreading the word about the endless music, theatre, dance, art, and documentary film opportunities available to you.

I am thrilled for everything in store this year, especially the six world-class performances lined up for the Secrest Artists Series. Our season opener on Thursday, Sept. 24 at 7:30 p.m. in Brendle Recital Hall features the brilliant **Isidore String Quartet** alongside cellist Sterling Elliott. Later in October, **Actors From The London Stage** will join us for a weeklong residency — working directly with students across multiple departments before culminating in performances of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*. Be sure to check out the **full line-up of Secrest events** to plan your season.

We are also excited to announce a groundbreaking new partnership between the Wake the Arts Center, Carnegie Hall, the WFU Office of Wellbeing, and the WFU Neuroarts Lab to bring a series of **Wellbeing Concerts** to campus. Our inaugural concert on Wednesday, Sept. 9, will feature indie-folk duo The Graes. Centered on the theme “Being Bold in New Beginnings,” CJ and Cassie Grae’s music focuses on resilience, emotional growth, and deep human connection — offering a perfect opportunity to ground yourself for the semester ahead.

As always, campus is bursting with creative energy. Keep reading for a few more highlights, and don’t forget to subscribe to the Wake the Arts calendar so you never miss a moment.

Warmest regards,

Hayden Barnes ('00)
Artistic Director, Secrest Artists Series



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Kicking off Fall semester with orientation events and new funding opportunities



We’re so excited to welcome you back to a new academic year! We’ve been all over campus the past two weeks welcoming new and returning students, faculty and staff as we gear up for a year packed to the brim with arts energy. Don’t forget to subscribe to our [Google calendar](#) to stay up to date with the latest arts events!

The Wake the Arts Center provides funding opportunities for collaborative creative and scholarly work:

Wake the Arts Center Grants (Up to \$2,000)

The Wake the Arts Center supports projects that combine the arts (music, theatre, dance, art, art history, film, and creative writing) with each other and/or with other disciplines, centers, and programs. We support project proposals from WFU faculty, students, and staff that range from course enhancements, performance projects, guest artist visits, commissioned works, exhibitions, panel discussions, receptions, screenings, and research and conference funding.

Since 2020, we have fueled 164 interdisciplinary projects. Our application process is straightforward and fair, and projects are received and evaluated on a rolling basis by our advisory committee, usually within 1-2 weeks.

[Proposal form](#) | [Learn more](#)

Paired exhibitions address themes of race, identity, and mass media in the past and present



Hank Willis Thomas: High Visibility

Aug. 25 - Dec. 2

Hanes Gallery of Art

Opening Reception: Sept. 10, 5-8 p.m.

Conceptual artist **Hank Willis Thomas** (b. 1976) addresses themes of race, identity, history, and mass media through his multidisciplinary practice. For over a decade, Thomas has worked with retroreflective vinyl, the material used to make highway and street signs, to illuminate histories past and present. When light hits the surface of this medium, it is reflected back toward the source, like car headlights striking a traffic sign. **Hank Willis Thomas: High Visibility** is presented in tandem with **Flash Point: The Civil Rights Photography of Danny Lyon**.



Flash Point: The Civil Rights Photography of Danny Lyon

Sept. 17 - Jan. 3
Reynolda House Museum of American Art

Flash Point will debut more than fifty gifts promised to Wake Forest University by James and Wendy Agah, parents of a current student and a recent alumnus. The collection represents the largest single gift of photographs in the university’s history and allows a comprehensive understanding of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s. Danny Lyon photographed the violence, but he was also able to elevate the organizers, planners, orators, scribes, and publicists of a complex national network of youthful patriots engaged in direct, non-violent action. For their own sake — and the nation’s — they courageously pursued a course charted by Dr. King: “The way of nonviolence leads to redemption and the creation of the beloved community.” The exhibition is co-curated by Phil Archer, Betsy Main Babcock Deputy Director, and Ashley Givens, adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Art at Wake Forest University

More about Hank Willis Thomas: High Visibility

More about Flash Point: The Civil Rights Photography of Danny Lyon



New Works in the John P. Anderson Student Art Collection

stArt Gallery, Sept. 1 - Oct. 3
Opening Reception: Tuesday, Sept. 1, 5-7 p.m. (stArt Gallery)

Established in 1993, the **John P. Anderson Student Art Collection** purchases student works as a way to recognize the accomplishments of Wake Forest’s student artists, including those who have achieved Honors in the Studio Art major. The collection consists of works purchased at the annual student exhibition at **Charlotte and Philip Hanes Gallery** each Spring and those bought from Studio Art honors students. These new works, accessioned into the collection in 2026, span media including sculpture, photography, painting, drawing, and printmaking.

Read more



Wellbeing Concert Series

Music has the unique ability to help us process, heal, and thrive. Our **Wellbeing Concerts** weave together rich live performances and gentle mindfulness practices to create a deeply nurturing environment. More than just a show, each concert is a shared journey — a space where artists and audiences connect, recharge, and discover actionable self-care tools to enrich their daily lives long after the music ends. Attendees are invited to select from a variety of seating options, to relax and absorb the music in whatever way they feel appropriate. This series is a partnership between Carnegie Hall’s Weill Music Institute, the Wake the Arts Center, and Wake Forest’s Wellbeing Center. The first concert in the series features indie-folk singer-songwriter duo The Graes. This first event is student-focused and **tickets are free through our website**.

The Graes

Wednesday, Sept. 9, 6 p.m.
Hanes Art Gallery

“We write about life — the good, the bad, the ugly — it’s how we process, heal, and reset.” — The Graes



For our very first Well Being concert, we are honored to welcome The Graes (CJ and Cassie Grae), an indie-folk singer-songwriter duo from Wilmington, North Carolina.

The Graes bring a rare, transparent vulnerability to their music, using complementary voices and rich harmonies to touch on themes of resilience, emotional growth, and deep human connection. Their songs offer a sanctuary for processing life's hurdles and discovering solace in shared stories. Prepare to lean in, listen deeply, and experience the healing resonance of live music.

Tickets

“Walt Whitman’s American Dream”

by Sarah Vander Schaaff
Sept. 10, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
ZSR Library 625 - Special Collections



Theatre faculty members, directed by Dr. Cindy Gendrich, will present a staged reading of *Walt Whitman’s American Dream*, a new play by Sarah Vander Schaaff, in Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collections & Archives (ZSR 625) on Thursday, Sept. 10 at 4:30 p.m. The reading of this lively biopic is part of Special Collections & Archives’ programming for the 2026 Semiquincentennial year. The event will also feature a special exhibit of 19th-century Whitman editions, including an autographed 1855 first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, from the Rare Books Collection.

Running time is 90 minutes, and light refreshments will be available. Doors open at 4 p.m. The reading is free and open to the public.

Read more

Visually impaired choreographer and dance researcher presents interactive lecture

Tuesday, Sept. 15, 4 p.m.
Olin 101



In this interactive lecture, “What Does It Smell Like? Audio Description & Multi-Sensory Immersion as Methodologies for Access,” visually impaired choreographer and dance researcher **Rachel DeForrest Repinz** introduces a multisensory framework for choreography and research that challenges vision as the primary mode of knowing. At the intersection of Disability Justice, sensory ethnography, and access-centered practices, she will demonstrate how tools like audio description and sensory worldbuilding can expand research, teaching, and interdisciplinary knowledge-making across fields.

[Read more](#)

Face to Face Speaker Forum with Cynthia Erivo

Wednesday, Sept. 16, 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

LJVM Coliseum

Don't miss seeing Cynthia Erivo at the Face to Face Speaker Forum event at the LJVM Coliseum! Erivo is an Emmy-, Tony- and Grammy-winning actress and singer, who has also been an Oscar nominee! She'll be performing and in conversation with Dominick Amendum, the Musical Director of Wicked on the stage and screen. **Register for free student tickets.**



Free shuttles will be running between campus (Lot P) and the LJVM from 5:45-9:00 p.m. Be sure to look for the game table — sponsored by Subway — on the Coliseum concourse to possibly win a prize!

[Read more](#)



Come attend the 2026 Winston-Salem Dance Medicine Conference

Sept. 18, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Bowman Gray Center for Medical Education

475 Vine Street, Winston Salem, NC 27101

The Neuroarts Lab at Wake Forest believes dance is medicine! Learn about this upcoming conference in Winston-Salem on Sept. 18, led by Advocate Health and WFU School of Medicine physician, Dr. David Popoli. Consider registering and joining us!

[Read more](#)

Secrest Artists Series: Isidore Quartet + Sterling Elliott

Thursday, Sept. 24, 7:30 p.m.

Brendle Recital Hall

Free to students, faculty and staff



Experience a transformative evening of chamber music as the **Isidore String Quartet** — celebrated for their commitment to “revisit, rediscover, and reinvigorate...” the classical canon — joins forces with the virtuosic cellist Sterling Elliott. This powerhouse collaboration moves from the elegant, cello-forward brilliance of Mozart’s String Quartet No. 21 in D Major, K. 575 and the evocative Bridge 3 *Idylls* to the monumental emotional depth of Schubert’s *Cello Quintet*. Combining the quartet’s Banff-winning precision with Elliott’s acclaimed “joyous musicianship,” the performance promises to treat these established masterpieces with a sense of innovation.

“A focus and command beyond their years... the sweeping coherence and blazing virtuosity of their narrative had the audience leaping to their feet at the end.” — Violinist.com.

[Read more](#) | [Tickets](#)

OUT at the Movies Opening Night Screening
Thursday, Sept. 24, 7 p.m. (doors open at 6 p.m.)
Kulynych Auditorium - Byrum Welcome Center
Reception: 8:45 p.m. in the lobby



OUT At The Movies International Film Festival will hold its Preview Night Screening at the Kulynych Auditorium in partnership with the Documentary Film Program. Prior to the screenings, OUT At The Movies will announce its third annual student internship, in collaboration with the DFP. The partnership between OUT at the Movies and the DFP highlights the intersection of experiential learning, arts education, and community partnerships, and is the driving force behind OATM’s efforts to highlight local culture through film, and supporting emerging filmmakers as they launch their careers in the arts. The event is free and open to the public.

[Read more](#)



The Firebugs
Written by Max Frisch
Directed by Brook Davis
Sept. 25-26 & Oct. 1-3 at 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27 & Oct. 4 at 2:00 p.m.
Tedford Stage, Scales Fine Arts Center

Woe to us! Fires are blazing everywhere! A chorus of firefighters and all the newspapers warn of dangerous arsonists on the loose. The upstanding Gottlieb and Babette Biedermann invite two strangers (who smell of gasoline) into their comfortable home to sleep in their attic. Surely these charmers can’t be the firebugs... Max Frisch’s funny and pointed political satire warns of the perils of complacency and playing it safe in a dangerous, combustible world.

[Tickets available starting September 8](#)

Alumni spotlight: Brittni Shambaugh Addison (’10)

“Early in my career, I made a point to say YES to every opportunity that presented itself, and I went into each experience with an open heart and mind. I tried to make sure that I walked away from each undertaking having learned and grown in some way, and having left a good impression on those I worked with... At the end of the day, you have to ask yourself WHY you have chosen this path. If it is for external validation, you are likely not going to ever feel satisfied. I hold very strongly to Stanislavski’s principle — “Love the art in yourself, not yourself in the art.” That has served me well.”



Theatre major Brittni Shambaugh Addison (’10) shares her professional journey. Read her profile and hundreds of other alumni stories on DeacLink, our arts alumni network site.

[Read Brittni’s profile](#)

Coming Soon

Thursday, Aug. 27
Drinks @ Dusk
(6pm - 9pm, Reynolda House Museum of American Art) \$30 | Ages 21+ only

Tuesday, Sept. 1
New Works in the **John P. Anderson Student Art Collection:** Reception
(5-7pm, stArt Gallery)

Wednesday, Sept. 9
The Graes: Wellbeing Concert Series
(6pm, Hanes Art Gallery)

Thursday, Sept. 10
Hank Willis Thomas: High Visibility Opening Reception
(5pm-8pm, Hanes Art Gallery)

Walt Whitman’s American Dream
(4:30pm, ZSR Library 625 - Special Collections)

Friday, Sept. 11
BRC Gallery Opening Reception: Athletics
(3-5pm, Farrell Hall Suite A05 / Brockway Recruiting Center Gallery)

Wednesday, Sept. 16
Face to Face Speaker Forum with Cynthia Erivo
(7:30-8:45pm, LJVM Coliseum)

Monday, Sept. 21
Faculty Recital: Mathilde Handelsman, piano and Edward Cho, cello
(7:30pm, Brendle Recital Hall) **Wednesday, Sept. 23**
“Legacy: Apartheid’s Shadow” film screening

Thursday, Sept. 24
Isidore Quartet + Sterling Elliott - Secrest Artists Series
(7:30pm, Brendle Recital Hall)

OUT at the Movies Opening Night screening
(6pm, Kulynych Auditorium - Byrum Welcome Center)

Friday, Sept. 25
The Firebugs
(7:30pm, Tedford Mainstage)

Saturday, Sept. 26
The Firebugs
(7:30pm, Tedford Mainstage)

Sunday, Sept. 27
The Firebugs
(2pm, Tedford Mainstage)

Thursday, Oct. 1
The Firebugs
(7:30pm, Tedford Mainstage)

Friday, Oct. 2
Family Weekend Choral Highlight Concert
(5pm, Brendle Recital Hall)

The Firebugs
(7:30pm, Tedford Mainstage)

Chimes of Freedom Performance Series: Concert Series
(7:30-9:30pm, Reynolda House Museum of American Art)
Tickets: \$75 | \$60 for Museum Members

Saturday, Oct. 3
The Firebugs
(7:30pm, Tedford Mainstage)

Chimes of Freedom Performance Series: Concert Series
(7:30-9:30pm, Reynolda House Museum of American Art)
Tickets: \$75 | \$60 for Museum Members

Sunday, Oct. 4
The Firebugs
(2pm, Tedford Mainstage)

Chimes of Freedom Performance Series: Concert Series
(2-4pm, Reynolda House Museum of American Art)
Tickets: \$75 | \$60 for Museum Members

Friday, Oct. 9
Faculty Recital: Larry Weng, piano
(7:30pm, Brendle Recital Hall)

Wednesday, Oct. 14
WFU Music Film Screening: Setan Jawa
(7:30pm, Brendle Recital Hall)

Sunday, Oct. 18
Oktoberfest Sunday Salon Concert
(3pm, Brendle Recital Hall)

Wednesday, Oct. 21
WFU Wind Ensemble Concert
(7:30pm, Brendle Recital Hall)

Wednesday, Oct. 21-Saturday, Oct. 24
SECAC National Conference

Thursday, Oct. 22
Actors From the London Stage: “Much Ado About Nothing”
(7:30pm, Brendle Recital Hall)

Friday, Oct. 23
WFU Symphony Orchestra Concert – Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9 in E minor
(7:30pm, Brendle Recital Hall)



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