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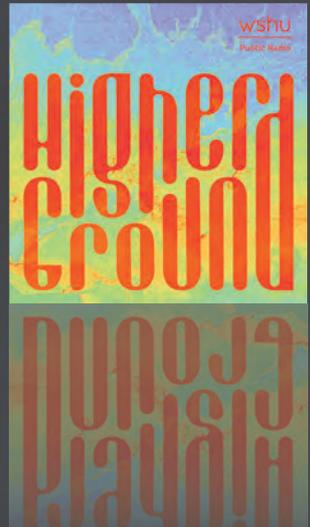
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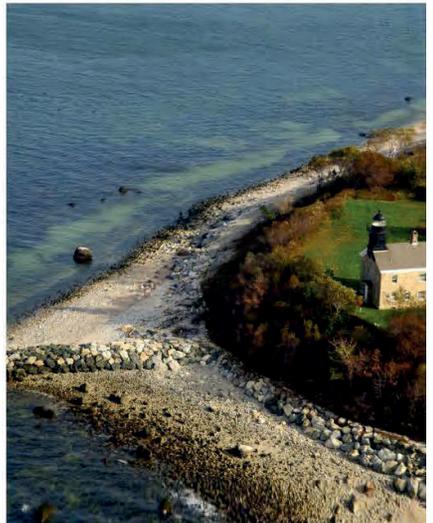
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STONY BROOK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Saturday, October 5, 2024, 8:00 PM

Paul Watkins

Conductor

Minyi Zhang

Pianist

PROGRAM

Island Rhythms

Joan Tower (b. 1938)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

I. Maestoso

II. Adagio

III. Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

**Variations on an Original Theme
for Orchestra, 'Enigma,' Op. 36**

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Theme (Enigma: Andante)

Variation I (L'istesso tempo) "C.A.E."

Variation II (Allegro) "H.D.S.-P."

Variation III (Allegretto) "R.B.T."

Variation IV (Allegro di molto) "W.M.B."

Variation V (Moderato) "R.P.A."

Variation VI (Andantino) "Ysobel"

Variation VII (Presto) "Troyte"

Variation VIII (Allegretto) "W.N."

Variation IX (Adagio) "Nimrod"

Variation X (Intermezzo: Allegretto) "Dorabella"

Variation XI (Allegro di molto) "G.R.S."

Variation XII (Andante) "B.G.N."

Variation XIII (Romanza: Moderato) " * * * * "

Variation XIV (Finale: Allegro) "E.D.U."

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STONY BROOK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Paul Watkins **Conductor**

Acclaimed for his inspirational performances and eloquent musicianship, Paul Watkins enjoys a distinguished career as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, and conductor. He is the Artistic Director of the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Detroit (since 2014), the cellist of the Emerson String Quartet



(2013-2023), and Visiting Professor of Cello at Yale School of Music (since 2018). He took first prize in the 2002 Leeds Conducting Competition, and has held the positions of Music Director of the English Chamber Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra.

As a cellist, Watkins has given regular concerto performances with prestigious orchestras across the globe. Also a dedicated chamber musician, Watkins was a member of the Nash Ensemble (1997-2013) and the Emerson String Quartet (2013-

2023). After 44 successful seasons, the Quartet has decided to retire, and undertook an extensive series of farewell tours, culminating in their final performances in New York Lincoln Center in October 2023, where the concert was filmed for a planned documentary by filmmaker Tristan Cook, and the release of their final recording of Berg, Chausson, Schoenberg, and Hindemith with prestigious guests soprano Barbara Hannigan and pianist Bertrand Chamayou.

As a conductor, Watkins has conducted all the major British orchestras and a wide range of international orchestras. In 2006 he made his opera debut conducting a critically praised new production of Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* for Opera North.

Highlights of the 23/24 season include a recording of the Richard Rodney Bennett cello concerto for Chandos with the BBC Scottish Symphony, Tippett's Triple Concerto with the Halle orchestra, and Shostakovich with the Aalborg Symphony.

Minyi Zhang **Pianist**

Minyi Zhang, a Chinese-born pianist, earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees at The Juilliard School and is currently pursuing her Doctoral degree at Stony Brook University under the tutelage of Gilbert Kalish.

STONY BROOK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Born in Shenzhen, China, Minyi began studying piano at age six and started performing throughout China shortly thereafter, with a notable performance at the XXVI Summer Universiade in Shenzhen. At 12, she made her concerto debut with Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 2 after winning the Gold and Grand Prizes at the Third "Changjiang Cup" National Piano Tournament. She also won 1st prize three times in the Shenzhen Piano Open Competition. At 15, Minyi moved to the U.S. to attend Interlochen Arts Academy, where she was awarded the Edward P. Frohlich and George and Joyce Kempton Academy Piano Scholar.

Her teachers have included Mei Xiao, Zhaoyi Dan, Mingqiang Li, Thomas J. Lymanstull, Jerome Lowenthal, Matti Raekallio, Joseph Kalichstein and Julian Martin. She has also worked with Arie Vardi, Richard Goode, Jean-

Yves Thibaudet, and Emanuel Ax in masterclasses.

Recent highlights in Minyi's performance career include performances of Schumann's Concerto in A minor with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra and Ravel's Concerto in G major with the Fort Worth Symphony. She has also performed at events for The New York Times and New York Fashion Week, as well as at major venues in China, Japan, and the United States. Additionally, she has earned numerous prizes and recognition at international competitions.

Since the age of 11, Minyi has used music to serve the community, performing for individuals in hospitals and care homes, and participating in various fundraising events. In addition to her performing career, she is an experienced educator currently teaching at The Juilliard School and has recently joined Steinway as an Educational Partner.

Beyond her role as a pianist, Minyi is also an actress and recently made her New York theater debut at the Jeffrey and Paula Gural Theater. In her free time, she enjoys running, fencing, and singing, and she is a silver and bronze medalist at the Shenzhen Taekwondo Sparring Tournament.

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Island Rhythms

Joan Tower

If we go by the title, rhythm should be at center stage in Joan Tower's "Island Rhythms." Rhythm does indeed provide momentum, excitement, and propulsion in the composition, but just as notable is the work's colorful use of orchestration. Described by the composer as a "celebratory piece divided into three sections," the work reflects a variety of influences from Caribbean drum music to French composer Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Throughout the composition, a repeated figure—stemming from the repetition of a single note—is explored through what Tower refers to as "textural, timbral, registral, and dynamic" changes to create contrast and a sense of forward motion. And it is orchestration that allows Tower to draw out that repeated figure for this seven-minute work.

The piece opens with a single, repeated note—an A—in the timpani, followed by sustained notes in the horns and trombones. The repeated note then moves to the tom-tom and violins before an important change occurs: Tower adds a short B flat on the downbeat of a few measures, starting to break the stranglehold that the A has had up until now. The percussion and strings continue this pattern, soon adding additional B flats to the phrase. The orchestration and dynamics build,

and soon the brass and percussion take over repeated notes. Soon the brass are playing in thirds and leaping beyond that initial half step between the B-flat and A that had occupied the strings.

A new contrast appears when the winds—at first the piccolo and the oboe—start to play faster runs. These soon take over from the repeated notes, but each run, if one listens closely, is centered around a particular pitch; the idea of the repeated note has not vanished completely. The rest of the orchestra adds to these fast passages, creating a sense of movement that perhaps reflects the movement of water.

The idea of water becomes especially important in the slower middle section of the work. As Tower describes it, the slow, upward-moving phrases represent "an attempt to depict an underwater swimmer gradually rising to the water's surface from a very deep place in the ocean."

The whole orchestra rises in pitch, leading to a short piccolo solo. After a final held note, the music returns to a faster tempo, building toward a final climax using techniques similar to those in the first section. The climax consists of loud, repeated chords blasted out by the full ensemble, and was, according to Tower, inspired by a brief section in the final movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. The volume and pitch drop, fading away before building to more loud, repeated chords to end

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the festive work.

Note by Samantha Tripp

Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15. Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms's First Piano Concerto was conceived as a sonata for two pianos in March of 1854, but Brahms struggled to balance his symphonic and pianistic conceptions. He reworked the material over the next four years, finally deciding to cast it as a piano concerto. The piece was premiered in Hanover, January 22, 1859 with the twenty-five year old composer as soloist.

The Concerto's uncommon seriousness of mood is particularly noticeable in the first movement, which eschews spectacular virtuosity for its own sake and even lacks a solo cadenza.

Critics and audiences reacted negatively both to the premiere and to a Leipzig performance the following week. Concerning the reception in Leipzig, a disappointed Brahms wrote to a friend:

I force this sharp and hard steel pen...to describe to you how it came about and was brought to completion, that my concerto here has been a brilliant and decisive...flop... The first movement and the 2nd [sic] were listened to without emotion. At the end three hands attempted to fall slowly one into another, whereupon,

however, a quite distinct hissing from all sides forbade such demonstrations...

In some ways, the initial negative reception can be understood. Brahms provides not a light-hearted solo concerto with spectacular surface virtuosity, but a lengthy, somber, and dramatic work that made considerable demands of its listeners.

Both drama and sober character are evident in the first movement. The opening theme, marked *Maestoso*, is said to reflect Brahms's reaction to the news in 1854 that his mentally unstable friend and mentor Robert Schumann had attempted suicide. The theme, presented in octaves in the violins and cellos, outlines a Bb major triad over a pedal on D.

The tonal instability created by this juxtaposition is emphasized by trills that sit at dissonant intervals above the pedal. A brief, lyrical excursion to the remote region of Bb minor precedes a return to the opening theme. A horn call heralds the piano's statement of an undulating melody that flows into evocations of the introductory material. The dignified second theme is reminiscent of a hymn in its voicings and simple opening, but a light, waltz-like theme in the compact development section introduces a startling change in mood. Brahms continues his unorthodox and unsettling tonal explorations with an E major orientation at the return of the opening material. The movement ends dramatically, with virtuoso flourishes by the pianist

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leading to the fortissimo ending for full orchestra.

The first movement's drama is countered in the gentle D major Adagio. In sketches, this movement was marked "Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini" (Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord). This marking suggests an association with Robert Schumann, whom Brahms often called "Mynheer Domini," but Brahms actually described the piece as a "gentle portrait" of Clara Schumann.

The movement is cast in a conventional ternary form. The piano opens the rondo finale with a sprightly d minor Allegro non troppo driven by unceasing sixteenths in the accompaniment and syncopated figures in the melody. This movement is closely modeled on the last movement of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. Like that work, it includes a fugato and a brief statement of the theme in a major key at the end of the developmental episode. Just before the coda, Brahms finally allows a bravura piano cadenza. Although the movement begins in the home key of d minor, it ends with a triumphant major-mode coda.

Note by Cassandra Hartford

Variations on an Original Theme for Orchestra, 'Enigma,' Op. 36 Edward Elgar

Though a moderately successful local composer from the Midlands with several commissioned choral

works and published instrumental pieces, Edward Elgar was, in 1899, hardly well-known to a wider public.

The first performance of the *Variations on an Original Theme for Orchestra*, Op. 36 – better known as the "Enigma" Variations – launched Elgar to international recognition and placed him at the forefront of British composers of the Second English Musical Renaissance. This piece is often considered as initiating a 20th century explosion of British orchestral music, and it has remained firmly entrenched in the orchestral repertoire as one of the most well loved British works of the period.

At the time he composed the Variations, Elgar was recently married. The often-repeated story is that he was sitting with his wife Alice in their parlor one evening after a long day of teaching. Elgar was relaxing and improvising at the piano. At one point his wife Alice called out to him, "Edward, that's a good tune...Play it again!" He did, and continued to amuse Alice by recasting the melody in ways suggesting various friends. Alice was taken with the idea, and encouraged him to turn the improvised character sketches into a formal work.

In the weeks following, Elgar composed a set of fourteen orchestral variations on the theme, each a musical portrait of a friend or colleague. Those acquaintances Elgar chose to portray, identified in the score by a nickname or their initials, were not necessarily his closest friends, since

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many of them are missing. Instead, Elgar seemed intent on choosing from among his acquaintances very different characters to capture in music, both pragmatically as a way of offering musically contrasting variations, and more personally, to offer a tribute to his new life and his new domestic circle of friends. He and his wife frame the portraits contained in the work: Alice's variation (I. C.A.E.) is the first variation, and his, entitled "E.D.U.," Alice's pet name for him, the last. The variations differ conspicuously, each capturing both the general character and a specific attribute of an individual. For example, their young neighbor Dora Penny's stutter is represented in the woodwinds (X. "Dorabella"), and the cellist Basil Nevinson's melody is prominently given to the cellos (XII. "B.G.N."). A particularly amusing variation opens with George Sinclair's bulldog Dan falling in to the River Wye and his bark of joy on being pulled out of the water (XI. "G.R.S").

Variation IX, "Nimrod," lies at the center of the piece. It represents August Jaeger, Elgar's close friend and contact at Elgar's music publishing firm Novello. The connection is clear – Jaeger's German name can be translated as hunter, and Nimrod was the great hunter from the Book of Genesis.

The variation is marked *nobilmente*, and in the words of Ernest Newman, "grave and composed, its final statement is extremely dignified, glowing with the riches of colour, and

breathing some of the most elevated inspiration that modern music can show." It is possibly a reference to an important moment between the two men; Elgar, suffering from depression and threatening to cease composing, went for a woodland walk with Jaeger, who spoke to him of Beethoven's depression, giving him hope and courage to continue. Elgar later said that there is the merest hint of the opening bars of Beethoven's Eighth Piano Sonata (the "Pathétique") in the variation's beginning.

But the central question of the work is: what is the "Enigma?" It seems clear that it is not the theme itself, but something that lies behind the set of variations, whether musical or extra-musical. We will never really know, since the composer took the secret to the grave. As he put it, "The Enigma I will not explain - its 'dark saying' must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the connection between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes', but is not played.... So the principal Theme never appears, even as in some late dramas ... the chief character is never on the stage."

Note by Deborah Heckert

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2024 - 2025 CONCERT SEASON

The Stony Brook Opera features graduate students in voice, many of whom have already established professional singing careers. The three-year repertoire cycle includes one Baroque opera, one contemporary opera and a standard work, all staged or semi-staged.

Friday, November 15, 2024, 7 PM
Sunday, November 17, 2024, 3 PM
Chamber Opera
George Bizet – *Le docteur Miracle*

Free Admission, Recital Hall
Join Stony Brook Opera for their Fall chamber opera production of George Bizet's *Le docteur Miracle*.

Sunday, February 23, 2025, 3 PM
An Afternoon at the Opera

Free Admission, Recital Hall
Gala program of scenes from beloved and traditional operas with projected titles in English, semi-staged with piano accompaniment. Conducted by Daniel Beckwith and directed by Brenda Harris.

Saturday, April 26, 2025, 7 PM
Sunday, April 27, 2025, 3 PM
Main Stage Production
Massenet – *Le portrait de Manon*

Debussy – *L'enfant prodigue*

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\$10 (students)

Stony Brook Opera is thrilled to present an elegant double bill of Massenet's *Le portrait de Manon* and Debussy's *L'enfant prodigue*, sung in French with projected English titles. These two French operas, both premiered in 1884, cast the established French romantic composer Massenet against the then young Debussy's Prix de Rome winning work of *L'enfant prodigue*.



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Pre-concert Lecture, Recital Hall, 7PM

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Saturday, October 5, 2024

Joan Tower – *Island Rhythms*

Brahms – Piano Concerto No. 1

Elgar – *Enigma Variations*

Featuring pianist Minyi Zhang

Conducted by Paul Watkins

Friday, February 14, 2025

Bellini – Overture, “I Capuleti e Montecchi”

Bartók – Piano Concerto No. 3

Prokofiev – Symphony No. 5

Featuring pianist Owen Dodds

Conducted by Xian Zhang

Saturday, November 2, 2024

Debussy – *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faun*

Patrick Burgan – *La chute de Lucifer*

Ravel – *La valse*

Ravel – *Daphnis et Chloé Suite*

No.2

Featuring trombonist Matthew Nienow

Conducted by Jens Georg Bachmann

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Caroline Shaw – *Entr'acte*

Ibert – Flute Concerto

Shostakovich – Symphony No. 5

Featuring flutist Ji Young Kim

Conducted by Eduardo Leandro

Saturday, December 7, 2024

Conductorless, student-led performance coordinated by Professors Alan R. Kay and Jennifer Frautschi



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05/04

Le Nozze di Figaro (Encore)

05/28

Salome (Encore • 6pm)

06/13

Il Barbiere di Siviglia (Encore • 7pm)

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Tickets and info
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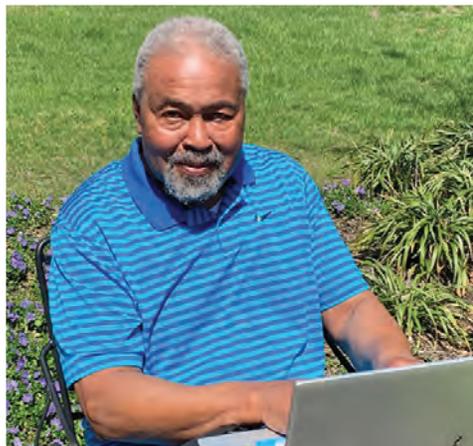
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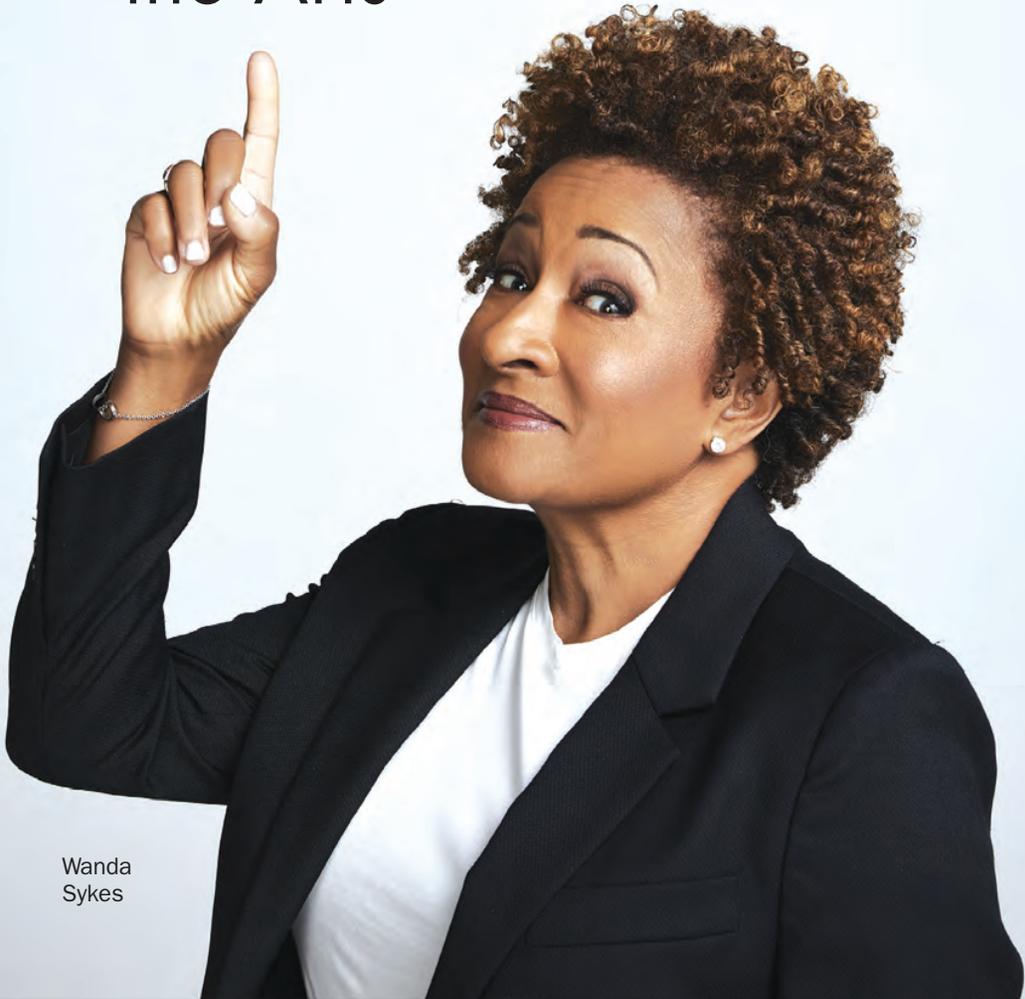
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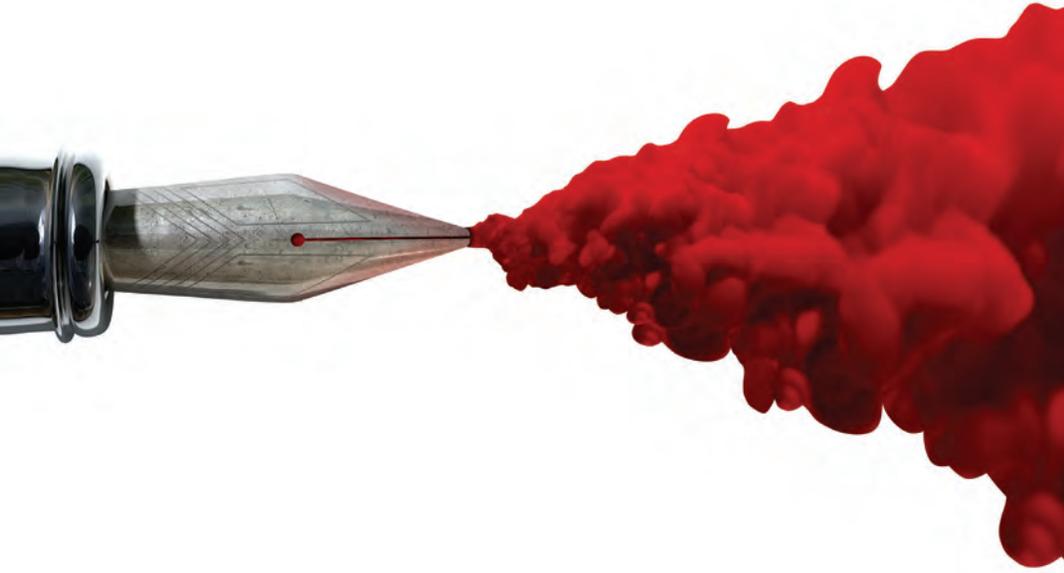
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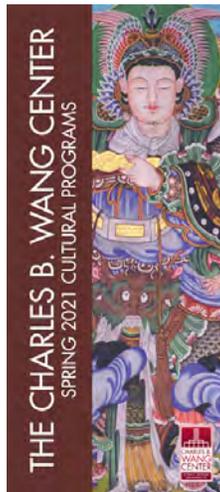
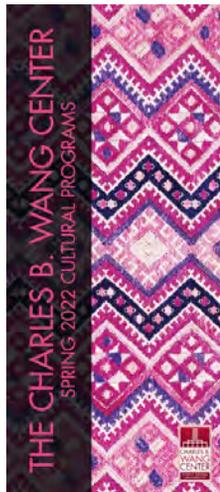
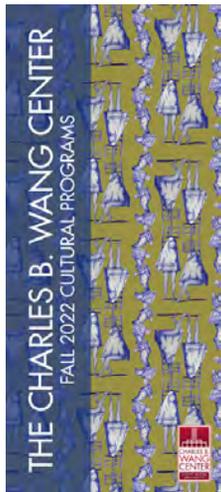
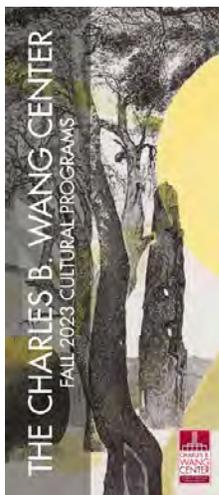
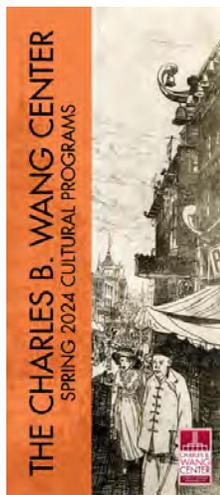


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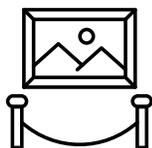


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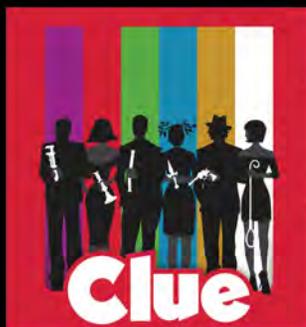
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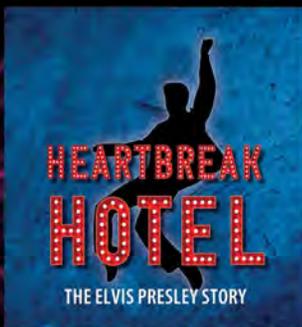
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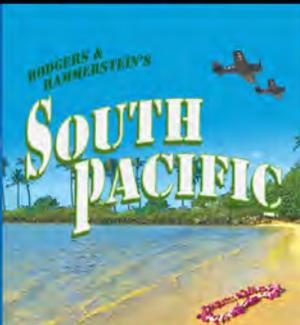
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Weekly meetings discussing
and educating peers on student
filmmaking

Annual student film
festival



Get in touch with us!
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Funded by the
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24-HOUR BOX OFFICE: stallercenter.com

Box Office: (631) 632-ARTS [2787]

Main Office: (631) 632-7235

Friends Office: (631) 632-7232

If you need disability-related accommodations, please call the Staller Center Box Office at (631) 632-ARTS [2787]. Stony Brook University/SUNY is an affirmative action, equal opportunity educator and employer. 14061561.

Latecomers will be seated at intervals determined by artists and management.

Please mute all cell phones.

Photography, audio recording, or videotaping without permission is forbidden.



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FALL 2024 AT-A-GLANCE

Emerson Legacy Concert

Sun, Sept. 15 5pm

Renée Elise Goldsberry

Sat, Sept. 21 8pm

John Pizzarelli

Sat, Sept. 28 8pm

Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra

Sat, Oct. 5 8pm

Encanto - The Sing-Along Film Concert

Mon, Oct. 14 4pm

Wanda Sykes

Fri, Oct. 18 8pm

Malevo

Sat, Oct. 26 8pm

Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra

Sat, Nov. 2 8pm

Cirque Kalabanté

Sat, Nov. 9 7pm

Some Enchanted Evening

Wed, Nov. 13 7pm

Peridance

Sat, Nov. 16 8pm

Starry Nights

Thur, Nov. 21 7pm

Jackie Evancho

Sat, Nov. 23 8pm

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus

Sun, Nov. 24 3pm

Anthony Nunziata

Fri, Dec. 6 8pm

Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra

Sat, Dec. 7 8pm

Caroline Campbell

Sat, Dec. 14 8pm

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

STALLER

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