

OLY ARTS

FALL/WINTER 2026

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- and More!



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Cover art:
Elizabeth Lord as Lord Franzannian

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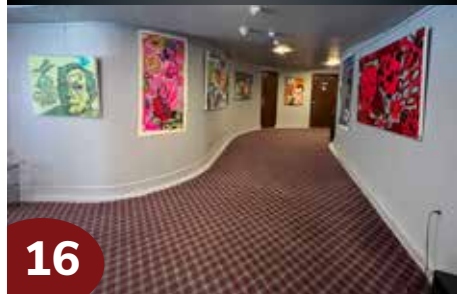
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20th Anniversary

Lord of Vaudeville

Two Decades Later, the Show Goes On

By Molly Gilmore

If you've been in Olympia long, chances are that when you hear the word "vaudeville," you think first of Elizabeth Lord — or Lord Franzannian, her alter ego and the maestro of the Royal Olympian Spectacular Vaudeville Show that bears his name. The 20th annual show, fully worthy of its hyperbolic name, opens Friday, Oct. 9.

When Lord and fellow entertainer Mark Franzen launched the show in 2007, vaudeville had all but faded into history. They, like others across the country, dug it up, dusted it off and brought it back to life.

Lord, the force behind the performing-arts festival Big-ShowCity, which lasted from 2001 to 2003, came up with the Royal Olympian Spectacular as a way to continue supporting the creative community and showcasing the vast range of local talent — which over the years has included sword-wielding belly dancers, performing dogs, burlesque acts from classically sexy to downright frightening, and a wedge of cheese (it stood alone).

Before the first show, Lord did her research, learning how to name a vaudeville show (start with the presenter's name, or in this case names, and then pile on the superlatives) and how to structure it (the first act should work even for late arrivals, and both the act before intermission and the closing act must be standouts).

That first year, Franzannian had rosy cheeks and a red hat and coat but had yet to acquire the off-kilter mustache and the big belly made from a pregnancy-simulating foam pad worn upside down.

"I was in ringlets," Lord said. "I must have taken a curling iron and spent hours just making this hairdo. ... The character evolved two or three years into the show's existence."

Franzen, who now lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., moved on to other pursuits after year two, but Lord, one of Olympia's best-known and best-loved performers, never wavered.

"It is very much my show," she told Oly Arts. "I am the producer and director. I curate the lineup, run the box office, make the poster and program, do the publicity, hang the curtains, focus the lights and gather the door volunteers."

She also helps to develop acts for those who have a talent but aren't sure what to do with it, writes stories and sketches, and creates a throughline act for each show — an act that happens in three parts, tying things together and giving audiences the joy of welcoming back what rapidly feels like an old favorite.

A storyteller, actress, director, emcee, wedding officiant and budding playwright, Lord has many gifts and many projects. The vaudeville show, though, has special meaning.

"As I reflect on having produced the show over all this time, I think about the many performers I've met, most of them up-and-coming performers, and what I'm most proud of is bringing this group together to create a performing-arts community," she said.



Elizabeth Lord at her "day job" in The Brotherhood Lounge

"During the run, they have time to talk, and they collaborate with one another going forward. They write plays together, or they form bands together, or they do their own variety show together."

Or they start their own puppet troupe — String & Shadow Puppet Theater — and go on to create another of Olympia's favorite things.

Lord of Vaudeville Two Decades Later, the Show Goes On Continued

In 2016, Donald Palardy III, then new to Olympia, was at work on a tabletop puppet show when he saw a flyer advertising auditions for the show.

“The auditions were happening in an hour,” Palardy said. “The puppet show was half-finished and I went home and threw it all in the car. My audition was essentially showing this half-made puppet show and going through the plot. ... When I finished, Elizabeth liked it, but she was a little confused. She thought that the act was a puppeteer with an unfinished show.”

Lord said yes to the puppet play, which she described as “weird and wonderful.” Palardy completed it in time for the vaudeville show, and Emily McHugh, already a skilled puppeteer and puppet maker, was in the audience. That meeting was the start of what became String & Shadow, whose giant-puppet extravaganzas (often featuring Lord) are a summer staple.

And that’s not the only way Lord and her show affected Palardy, who since 2022 has been a mainstay of the show’s wildly eclectic band, which this year also includes Monty Kerson, Stephanie Layton and Razz Matazz.

“The impact of the vaudeville show on my life is sort of impossible to overstate,” Palardy said. “Elizabeth Lord became a really good friend and creative collaborator. I had moved here from Connecticut, and I stayed here mainly because of the creative community — performers, musicians, people who make stuff.”

That community is probably the biggest reason Lord just keeps going on and on with the show, which happened even in 2020 in a virtual format that allowed pigs and goats to perform.

The cast of the 2025 vaudeville show





Lord Franzannian (Elizabeth Lord) as the character appeared in the first show

“I used to say, ‘Once I get to the 20-year mark, that will be it. The town will be tired of it, and I’ll be bored,’” she said. “But I keep getting excited, and people keep asking to be part of it.”

“I just love giving opportunities to up-and-coming people and bringing people together,” she added. “That is my proudest thing.”

WHAT: Lord Franzannian’s Royal Olympian Vaudeville Spectacular

WHERE: Wild Child, 414 4th Ave. E, Olympia

WHEN: 8 p.m. Oct. 9-11, 16-18, 23 and 24, with an all-ages matinee at 2 p.m. Oct. 18

HOW MUCH: \$20-\$35, \$7. for those 16 and younger for the matinee. Buy online (vaudevilleshow.ludus.com) or at the door, with no one turned away at the door for lack of funds

LEARN MORE: professionaltalker.com/vaudeville-show.html



Vaudeville co-founders Mark Franzen and Elizabeth Lord in a 2007 promo

Temporal: A group show by Coast Salish Museum of Fine Art

Stories of Indigenous Present, Re-imagining Indigenous Futures,
Curated by Mikaela Shafer in Partnership with Indigenous Creatives Collective

by Lynette Charters Serembe

Stories of Indigenous Present, Re-imagining Indigenous Futures, curated by Mikaela Shafer in partnership with Indigenous Creatives Collective.

The name Temporal references the here and now. Coast Salish Museum of Fine Art observes that Museums portray Indigenous people most often in the past tense, like relics disconnected from modern life. That disconnection is a form of censorship. Indigenous people are seen as separate from their art, their culture, and confined to however others choose to see them. CSMoFA are asking themselves the question:

“What does NOW and a FUTURE look when only WE define us?”

The show is full of real people and stories of current indigenous people, using their own voices in their own space. Envisioning a future where indigenous people exist in the here and now on their own terms. CSMoFA has taken over TCMoFA to represent Tribal Nations in the Northwest.

“We are here, we have been here, we will always be here.”

Coast Salish Museum of Fine Art is the art space shared with TCMoFA. Mikaela Shafer is well-healed as a local fine artist with many awards to her name. She has branched out in the last few years curating shows for SPSCC, TCMoFA, the NACF in Portland, All My Relations Art Gallery, Bar Francis, TAS, and Lantern Records.

Shafer has been involved with CSMoFA since their outset in 2023. The first show was juried, the second curated by Epiphany Couch, and the last two shows have been curated by Shafer alone.

CSMoFA was created by TCMoFA, but since last year she says CSMoFA has partnered with Indigenous Creatives Collective (see link in the LEARN MORE section) and Indigenous Creatives have had full autonomy to curate shows free of the limitation of traditional museum and gallery structures. This ensures Indigenous artists are amplified and supported, and participating artists are paid. Shafer is well known for putting together beautiful and challenging shows. Her professionalism, her eye for detail and commitment to quality never fails.

This is sure to be a noteworthy show.

She says: “The artists in the show are diverse and bring new, exciting perspectives to the museum. This show is all about Indigenous futurism, imagining a world where indigenous people are at the forefront, in control, and designing our world.”

Works will include impressive larger-than-life art pieces such as a giant beadwork called “The Long Walk” by Tammie Dupuis

(Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead

Reservation). Shafer tells us it will cascade from the ceiling down to and across the floor. This piece will be shown along with her piece called “War Shirt,” and this is the artist’s description:

“In this work, I call back to the war shirts of the Plains tribes on which protective painted motifs and items were applied. These shirts were meant to protect the warrior in battle by deflecting weapons and giving them strength.



Raven Daughter by Liz Morrow

In this piece, the faces represent my ancestors and relatives whose support in life and memory in death give me strength as a mixed blood person and as an artist expressing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of seeing and making.”

Cynthia Matherson (Comanche) will be showing beaded household objects; she has interactive beaded vending machines so that visitors can get their own beads and join in. She will also have a digital video piece. One of her beadwork pieces is named “Game of Telephone,” which will allow visitors to make a call and leave a message, she describes her work:

“This restored Western Electric candlestick telephone is an evolving piece intended to demonstrate two similar but slightly different bead weaving styles and show three bead sizes. Peyote beadwork is widely misunderstood due to inconsistent naming protocols and difficulty distinguishing the multitude of styles,”

During the opening, Shafer says that one of their installation artists, Megita Denton (Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan), will be performing a piece that visitors may not realize they are part of at first. She doesn’t want to give too much away about this piece, but it will prompt visitors to realize and acknowledge whose land they’re living on, and what they may owe by being here.

Shafer says: “Essentially, this entire exhibit is a call to action and a dream. It envisions a future where Indigenous people are the caretakers and creators of our world. What does it look like when we are given back all that has been taken from us? Visitors will feel like welcome intruders, slightly uncomfortable but curious and intrigued. Indigenous visitors will feel welcomed home, like they are getting a glimpse into their future descendants’ wildest dreams.”

Shafer has curated a divergent selection of thoughtfully executed artworks from Indigenous Coast Salish artists. These shows are always a gift because they open lines of communication between communities within the Olympia region, it is important to view art from the lesser reported perspective; through these shows we are more enlightened with a more three-dimensional idea of who we are as a community, and of the land where we live. That First Nations issues are less reported is a travesty that needs correcting.

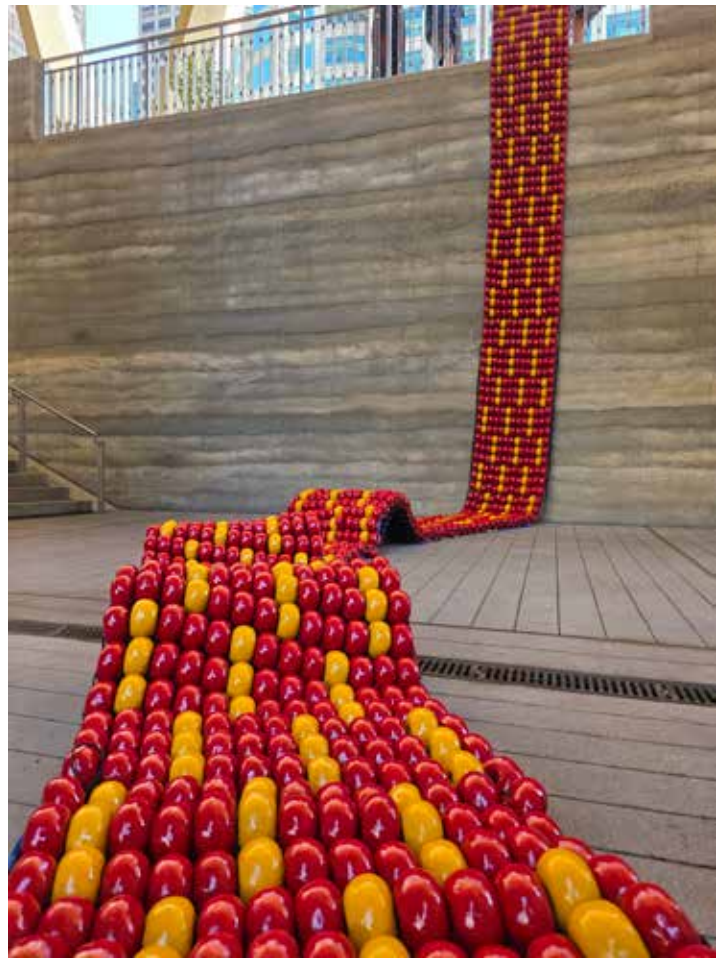
WHAT: Temporal a group show by CSMoFA

WHERE: 120 Olympia Ave NE, Olympia

WHEN: Oct. through Dec, Opening date Oct 2, reception 6-9 p.m. Fridays 2-6 p.m., (2-9p first Fridays), Saturday and Sunday 12-4 p.m.

HOW MUCH: Free

LEARN MORE: tcmofa.org/upcoming - indigenouscreatives.org/engageTemporal



The Long Walk by Tammie Dupuis (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation)



Time Back by Cynthia Matherson (Comanche)

Here Come the Trolls

By Molly Gilmore

A dozen new creatures will soon join the sea lions, tigers and bears at the Point Defiance Zoo and the wolves at Northwest Trek. The eagerly anticipated arrivals — on view to the public beginning Oct. 15 — are at home in wooded areas, where they blend in with the trees, but they shouldn't be too hard to spot: Each is between 7 and 9 feet tall.

The parks' new denizens are whimsical wooden trolls created by Danish activist and artist Thomas Dambo, who has attracted international attention for the folklore-inspired creatures he makes from reclaimed and recycled materials, including branches, twigs and pallets. They're part of the traveling exhibition "Trolls: A Field Study."

The visitors are, of course, not living and breathing creatures, but neither are they simply statues — at least not to their creator. "My trolls are alive in my universe," Dambo said in an interview (<https://filoli.org/discover-filoli/support/rose-wonders/>) for Filoli Gardens in Woodside, Calif., home to a 30-foot troll, the largest he's made thus far. "They have to feel natural." He doesn't label his creations with big signs or paint them in brilliant colors; rather, they are meant to be discovered in what feels like their natural habitat.

"In Nordic mythology, the trolls live in the forest, and there is this idea that ... they can be made of nature — like stone and bark and wood and trees," Dambo said in a

2021 interview (<https://www.theimagineteam.com/post/an-interview-with-artist-thomas-dambo>) for Imagine, the company coordinating the "Field Study" tour. "You can't really see them if you look too fast, but if you look a little bit closer, you might spy one."

"I can make a big sculpture that is made of the forest itself (being made of recycled wood), but the story is also that ... the trolls are protecting the forest," he added.

Since Dambo began making them in 2014, the trolls have captured the imaginations of people around the world. Fans travel far and wide to see them, tracking their journeys on the artist's Trollmap (<https://trollmap.com/>).

It was just this year, though, that he achieved recognition in the art world. His installation "The Garbage Man" — which includes his signature trolls along with a human figure made from old clothes, plastic bags and other trash — is on view through Nov. 29 at the Arken Museum of Contemporary Art, southwest of Copenhagen. The artist aims to bring "The Garbage Man" to a major U.S. museum after it closes in Denmark.

Each of Dambo's installations — like each of his trolls — has its own story. The tale of "The Garbage Man" is that a group of trolls broke into the museum and created the human figure out of trash, just as Dambo creates the trolls from repurposed and recycled wood.

The 12 trolls of Thomas Dambo's "Trolls: A Field Study" All photos courtesy of Imagine & Thomas Dambo





Thomas Dambo at work



"Boge", coming to Point Defiance

"Trolls: A Field Study" depicts a family of trolls who are curious about the mysterious lives of human beings. "On the night he was born, a little troll named Taks wandered into the human world," according to Dambo's website (<https://www.thomasdambo.com/works/afieldstudy>). "What he saw left him puzzled — strange machines, noisy boxes, people rushing around without stopping to talk to the trees." Taks told his siblings what he'd seen, and the whole lot decided to find out more.

"Field Study" felt like a perfect fit for Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, said Mick Szydlowski, a spokesperson for Point Defiance. "Just as our guests observe and learn about animals, ... these trolls arrive on their own mission to study humans, which creates a playful parallel we love," he said.

Of course, Dambo's focus on sustainability and environmental stewardship was also part of the appeal to the parks — and that focus is central to the artist's own mission. He calls himself a "recycle artist" and says that his work is as much about activism as it is about art.

"After I did a big birdhouse project where I made thousands of birdhouses out of recycled wood ..., I decided all my art would be made from other people's trash," the artist said in the Imagine interview. "I wanted to educate people about all the wonderful things you can make from waste."

"Trash is not disgusting," he told the New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/23/arts/thomas-dambo-garbage-man-trolls.html>). "It's disgusting to throw it out."

The "Field Study" trolls, which were first seen in 2025 in the U.K., are on view through Oct. 4 at the South Coast Botanic Garden near Los Angeles. Then they'll head to Pierce County, where four will move into Point Defiance, and the other eight will go to Northwest Trek.

"Thomas Dambo and his team craft each troll with careful attention to detail," said Ashley Friel of Imagine. "These trolls are designed with touring in mind and travel partially disassembled. Members of Thomas Dambo's team work alongside trusted local volunteers to carefully reassemble and install them at each destination."

The trolls will live in Tacoma and Eatonville until Jan. 24 and then be packed up for their next destination, yet to be announced. In other words, they're likely to spend a lot of the winter in wet weather.

But given the buzz that's already building, Szydlowski expects the troll siblings to have lots of company. "The experience is expected to draw ... troll enthusiasts traveling from across the region and even the country," he said. "We're excited to welcome that energy and enthusiasm."

WHAT: "Trolls: A Field Study"

WHERE: Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, 11610 Trek Drive E, Eatonville, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, 5400 N. Pearl St., Tacoma

WHEN: Oct. 15-Jan. 24

HOW MUCH: Included with admission or membership

LEARN MORE: <http://trolltrek.org>

Miss Pearl's World: A Multimedia Show and Performance by Kaia Selene

By Lynette Charters Serembe

Kaia Selene is a local artist who has been practicing mixed media and performance art for many years, she tells us creativity for her is not a choice, or for fun, but a necessity. Since her youth, she has been driven to make art, and creativity has helped her to survive. She says it wasn't until she was 41, that she made a show she herself rated as accomplished but as with all good art, the journey is the primary destination, the product is the intriguing manifestation of that journey.

Despite having had no budget for college, Kaia Selene has heavily invested in her own arts education, she has decades of serious art practice under her belt, studying and refining several disciplines, including painting, wet-felting, performance. Japanese butoh dancing; costume and mask making in New Orleans are a heavy influence, and also, in the last five to six years, culinary arts have made an appearance. She has had little formal training in art, which she has observed is a strength as it has allowed her to ad-lib her way through her creative process rather than adhere to given structures.

She admits she doesn't edit much and prefers to be inclusive, in her disciplines, her imagery, and her audience participants. This has resulted in a maximalist, multidisciplinary, constellation of an offering in which she invites you all to participate.

Kaia Selene is convinced that the art she makes does not originate from her; she feels like she's the messenger who is tapping into generally available creativity. Being the courier is her job, and she's committed to "create things that go beneath our surface and mundane interactions; connections that go beneath the surface of polite conversation".

In her show there will be an array of wall art, miniature art, wearables, plus tea and treats. Miss Pink Pearl will make two appearances: Friday Oct. 26 at 8 p.m., and Saturday, Oct. 3 2 at 4 p.m.

In her performances she appears as various personas (in the past you may have seen her as Sissy von Meow Meow at Community Print, and SPSCC, also in *Cake Math* with Alicia Capp performed at TCMoFA, and The Crypt Bar, and you may also have seen her costuming designs showing at TCMoFA).

Making her grand solo debut at Lantern Records is Miss Pink Pearl, (she has another upcoming persona to be revealed, who is Madame Cro(w)ne, "a keeper of loss, death, grief and freedom named such because she's a crow crone spirit" and she has more in the making). She explains these are more channeled personalities that she has gleaned from the ether and made herself available as the vessel to deliver them to the audience.

Kaia Selene's personas elegantly sport elaborate hand designed couture, they are a mixture of 18th century Rose Bertin Marie Antoinette-style court fashion, and modern goth, there is an element of ethereality and playfulness about them. Food is an important part of her performances in her efforts to create an experience in communal collusion. She makes beautiful gluten free masterpieces in the form of exquisitely designed sweet offerings, but please note, you must meet her halfway to be rewarded and partake.



From *Cake Math* by Kaia Selene

The Candy Cave by Kaia Selene



Miss Pearl's World: A Multimedia Show and Performance by Kaia Selene Continued

Kaia Selene says the food is an invitation to participate. She says, "So much of entertainment is passive these days, and it's not good for people."

You don't have to leave your own sofa to be entertained, but meaningful social interaction requires vulnerability and bravery. Most life memories and social interactions involve food for a reason, where we all share together as a social experience. It's a way of inviting people in, in a way that is universally understood. She provides a safe place for the audience to be part of the performance.

Kaia Selene believes all humans are creative, and invites you to give yourself permission to join in. She believes everything is connected on a cellular level. She says, "We need to get back to that connection, to each other, and to the earth. That we need each other is an inescapable fact of life. As an artist I see it as my job to impede the delusion that we don't need each other."

Other upcoming performances are: Sept 12 at ISM Experimental Art & Music Festival. Kaia Selene will be doing live sound effects for Sqwyrms score to the 1914 vaudevillian silent film *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*; and on October 17, she will be doing a roaming performance for The Witches Ball of the West in Portland as Madame Cro(w)ne. (Over 21) Check her website for details: kaiaselene.com

WHAT: Performances and mixed media art by Kaia Selene

WHERE: Lantern Records, 509 Washington St SE, Olympia

WHEN: Friday Oct. 2 6-8 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 3, 2-4 p. m., wall art show up through end of October during store hours

HOW MUCH: Free

LEARN MORE: kaiaselene.com, @latnternrecords.oly



Miss Pearl's Headpiece by Kaia Selene



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Visual Arts fill the Lobby at Harlequin Productions

Tom Fath's Harlequin Gallery show – Photo by Lynette Charters Serembe

by Alec Clayton

Lynette Charters Serembe is a multi-talented artist, writer, Oly Arts board member, and curator of art exhibits in the Harlequin Productions' theater lobby and elsewhere. She says not nearly enough people are aware that the lobby of Harlequin's State Theater is also an art gallery that features exhibitions of work by local artists connected in some way to the subject matter of each of Harlequin's stage shows. There is an opening celebration for each exhibition where art lovers mingle, partake of snacks and drinks, and visit with the exhibiting artists.

In spring of 2019, Charters and her studio buddy Lucy Gentry approached Harlequin Marketing Director Helen Harvester and Artistic Director Aaron Lamb and asked if they could hang shows in the lobby. Permission was granted. The first few shows were curated by Gentry and Charters, Charters has been curating since. n Harvester and Lamb's request, Charters' paintings showed in the gallery with Harlequin's stage production of *The Women*, followed by many artists including Gentry herself, Susan Christian, Lois Beck, Sandra Bocas, Robyn Chance, Grace Duda, Tom Fath, Danny Gordo, Melissa Hammond, Mark Holland, Celery Jones, Mia Shulte and Judith Smith, Sharon Styer, Jimmy Ulvenes, Gail Ramsay Wharton, Mimi Williams, and more. Charters says "there have been so many great artists, and I apologize for not mentioning them all, we have shown over 100 artists at Harlequin to date. Most recently we showed Rachel Kopel's amazing and original meaningful body of work using mixed media and embroidery, which showed with Harlequin's stage production of *Where the Summit Meets the Stars*.

Robyn Chance did some great dog portraits which I entertainingly paired with Harlequin's *Hound of the Baskervilles*. We showed the whole of Kathy Flaatrud's class at Bush Middle School paired with the performance *What the Constitution Means to Me*, where they had two high schoolers debating live on stage, their show was very powerful. To prep for the gallery show, I visited the school to talk with the class. It was a rich exchange. The Squaxin Island Museum generously lent us artifacts from their collection when Harlequin was showing *Sovereignty* (written by Mary Kathryn Nagle, who came to see the play). It's been a very supportive and connecting endeavor, and I'm grateful to Harlequin for making the space available.

Longtime popular Olympia artist Becky Knold reminisces about her one-woman show in the Harlequin lobby:

"It was in December, and I remember putting together a few ideas for a little talk I gave in the Lobby —I had been asked by Lynette to draw a connection between my work and its theme to that of Harlequin's holiday production. That made me dig deep to think about the dark nature of my pieces — made almost entirely from black roofing paper and tar, spread thickly with a palette knife — and how they might relate to the holidays. So, the idea was presented that these pieces were in some way representative of the idea of hope and birth and overcoming darkness implicit in the holiday theme of Harlequin's production. I felt great satisfaction in having been given the opportunity to think more verbally about my art that usually stays unsaid."

"I can say that an important distinction in mounting a show at Harlequin is that the artist herself gets to help choose the pieces to show. Another distinction from showing in other galleries is that Lynette will work with you on hanging solutions which frees you to some extent from traditional framing restraints that galleries often place on artists. (Traditional galleries would not be likely to allow pieces utilizing materials such as roofing paper and tar.) After a brief period of discussion and questions in the Lobby, the usual treats (most especially Lynette's famous homemade brownies) were offered to the guests, while the browsing continued. The atmosphere of being in a theater was so enjoyable."

A recent show featured works by a pair of women who create visual art along with long careers in other fields: pug Bujeaud, who has been directing theatrical productions in Olympia for decades, and web and book designer, Oly Arts digital publication manager and retired therapist Gabi Clayton.

"I started painting in 2021- the theaters were down," Bujeaud said. "I had contracted COVID and was left with severe brain fog that left me unable to read or write to the ability that I was used to. Extremely depressed and desperate for a creative outlet, I took up watercolor, eventually leaning heavily into abstracted figurative art."

"Having my art exhibited is both exciting and nerve-wracking. I am comfortable sharing my art both as an actor and director, but those are the most collaborative of expressions. Whereas painting is very solitary and personal. As I am relatively new to the painting process, and having had no training, I have to I fight imposter syndrome. But both the process of painting, and reception of my work is extremely gratifying."

Charters says Harlequin is "a wonderful hub to check out great local artists and to connect with the arts community in general. Often some of the actors make an appearance at the receptions, and it's a good time to see what theatre productions Harlequin has coming up. It's a win-win one-stop-shop, there's so many fun things going on at Harlequin."

The quality of art shown at Harlequin equals that of any gallery. And you don't have to buy a ticket to the play to see the art.

WHAT: Harlequin Gallery receptions and shows

WHERE: The State Theater, 202 4th Avenue E, Olympia

WHEN: The next artist reception is on October 1st from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Check website for others.

HOW MUCH: Receptions are free, from 5:30 - 6:30. Other viewings are by arrangement, or through Harlequin theater performance tickets, which range in cost.

LEARN MORE: harlequinproductions.org (for theater tickets), harlequinproductions.org/show/our-town (for information on the next Gallery reception).



Sandra Bocas and Lynette at Bocas' Harlequin gallery show
– Photo by John Serembe

Jimmy Ulvenes' reception – Photo by Lynette Charters Serembe





More Than a Movie House: Oly Film Society Looks Ahead

by Karen Lunde

Dry autumn leaves clatter in colorful drifts down Olympia's 5th Avenue. Before you stands a landmark — an art deco theater building. Above its entry, with its multiple doors and old-fashioned ticket booth, hangs a neon sign proclaiming “CAPITOL.” A marquee promotes an upcoming movie. You might label the Capitol Theater an indie and art-house film venue, and you wouldn't be wrong. But insiders know the Capitol Theater is so much more. From late fall 2026 through the end of the year, the Capitol Theater will host a public film club, serve as a live-music venue, and showcase regional filmmakers. Then, in December, it becomes concert hall and cinema at once.

“What feels most important to me is that the Capitol Theater is a place where people can truly belong,” says Audrey Henley, executive director of the Olympia Film Society, which stewards the Capitol Theater. Henley sees the theater as more than a venue. People come to experience art, be in community, volunteer, and belong to something bigger than themselves. It also provides space for local artists and organizations to gather and be seen, while offering South Sound audiences innovative — and often delightfully fringe — films, music, and live performances they might not otherwise find locally.

The Olympia Film Society (OFS) was established in 1980 as a collective of film lovers and community members with a passion for independent, international, and classic cinema. The society made the Capitol Theater its primary home in 1986. Its current mission is to make film, music, and art exciting and accessible for the Olympia community, while also reaching beyond the two-block downtown theater district to the surrounding South Sound.

The society's role shifted from programmer and caretaker to owner in 2010, when it purchased the Capitol Theater. Since then, OFS has completed a new roof, critical electrical and mechanical work, stained-glass restoration, and other protective improvements.

“To fully address the theater's needs from roof to basement, OFS is preparing for approximately \$6.5 million in capital improvements over the next 5 to 7 years,” says Henley.

The venue was built in 1924 and designed by prominent Olympia architect Joseph Wohleb, with facade details that included ornate terra cotta decorations, stained-glass windows depicting the five muses, and marble flooring. Over the years, the building has endured natural aging as well as damage from a 1937 fire and the 2001 Nisqually earthquake. It occupies part of the Downtown National Historic District, and the Olympia Historical Society lists the Capitol Theater as “Historic Contributing.” Today, it has 754 seats, including accessible seating to accommodate different body types and disabilities. There's also assistance for patrons with sight and hearing needs.

But without events, a historic theater is just another pretty building. That's where Rob Patrick, Olympia Film Society's director of programming, enters the picture. A longtime film writer, Patrick was named a “programmer to watch” by *MovieMaker Magazine* in 2018. His philosophy includes an exciting and varied calendar with education, accessibility, and context at its heart. And that means a film screening should ideally offer more than just the show itself.

“When presenting 35mm prints, we like to discuss the significance of film preservation,” Patrick says. “When showcasing repertory cinema, we hope to reintroduce underseen gems or beloved classics to new audiences.”

The Olympia Library Film Club's October 25 screening of *Manhunter* — a thrilling adaptation of Thomas Harris's first novel in a four-book series featuring the enigmatic serial killer Hannibal Lecter — showcases that philosophy at work. The event launches the library's “Reels & Restorations” series, featuring a new 4K restoration, an introduction by film-club facilitator Zach Havekost, and free tickets distributed by the Olympia and West Olympia libraries.

In December, the Capitol Theater won't just host the beloved 1982 classic *The Snowman*; it will add live orchestral music. "As the story unfolds on screen, the orchestra carries every step, every snowfall, and the unforgettable *Walking in the Air* moment that has made the film a holiday favorite for generations," the event page proclaims.

The Olympia Film Society brings film to children in more ways than just special one-time events. "Access" means more than accommodating physical disabilities; it also means deliberately creating an entry point for young film buffs and their families. The OFS Kids Club serves up an ongoing Sunday program with free admission for kids 12 and under.

And then there's *Locals Only*, described as "an absolute bash of a fest" that "showcases the Pacific Northwest's creative community by celebrating independent filmmaking." The film festival will screen selected submissions from local filmmakers during a special event on November 6, 2026, at 7 p.m. Admission is free, with donations accepted at the door. "Locals Only continues to be one of our most popular programs because of the Pacific Northwest talent it showcases," says Patrick.

Although the theater and the Olympia Film Society serve the community, they also belong to it in a unique way. "Anyone can participate and find a meaningful role at the Capitol Theater," says Henley. The cinema and organization have been powered by volunteers since 1980. Henley says the society currently has 225 active volunteers. They can work on the street team, learn digital and — after training — 35mm projection, help run concerts and special events, supervise the lobby, or assist with cleaning and maintenance. Serving the theater not only brings volunteers a sense of satisfaction; volunteer hours can also earn free film tickets and behind-the-scenes experiences.

Membership is another important piece of the Olympia Film Society's offerings. Although the COVID pandemic affected numbers, the society is growing again and is currently home to 730 members.

Membership starts at \$60 per year for an individual, with dual, family, and business memberships also available. Along with the satisfaction of supporting the society's ambitious mission, members get reduced admission and concession prices, business discounts, and loyalty points.

Whether it's serving as a cinema, concert venue, or artists' showcase, the Capitol Theater is an evolving and eclectic part of Olympia's downtown that continues to reflect the creativity, care, and character of the South Sound community. A building, no matter how wonderful, can be inherited, but a cultural home must be recreated again and again by the people who pass through its doors, climb into the projection booth, take the stage, or simply sit, connected in their common fascination, when the lights go down.

WHAT: Olympia Library Film Club Presents: *Manhunter: The Final Cut* - 4K Restoration

WHEN: Sunday, Oct 25, 7 p.m.

HOW MUCH: Free; tickets available from the Olympia and West Olympia libraries. A library card may also be shown at the box office

LEARN MORE: olympiafilmsociety.org/movie/olympia-library-film-club-presents-manhunter-the-final-cut-4k-restoration.

WHAT: *Locals Only 2026*

WHEN: Friday, Nov 6, 7 p.m.

HOW MUCH: Free; donations accepted at the door

LEARN MORE: olympiafilmsociety.org/movie/locals-only-2026

WHAT: Olympia Symphony Presents: *The Snowman*

WHEN: Sunday, Dec 6, 3 p.m.

HOW MUCH: \$9-\$71

LEARN MORE: olympiafilmsociety.org/movie/olympia-symphony-presents-the-snowman





Molly Gilmore
"Arts Aficionado"

Catch Them If You Can: Arts Aficionado's Pics for '26

It's improbable — or maybe even downright impossible — that anyone could take in the abundance of plays, performances and exhibitions happening in Olympia and environs. That's an excellent problem to have, as far as the Arts Aficionado is concerned, but if you'd like help narrowing down the options, I'm at your service.

Here's a handful of the most promising events happening before the end of 2026. You might want to add them to your calendar (and get tickets, where needed) now.

Fall Arts Walk

The only thing better — and more quintessentially Olympia — than fall Arts Walk (artswalkoly.com/) is spring Arts Walk, when the weekend includes the Procession of the Species and the Luminary Procession. Though smaller than its sibling, the fall event fills downtown with free performances, art shows and plenty of people to watch.

WHEN & WHERE: 5 to 10 p.m. Friday, Oct. 2, and from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 3, in downtown Olympia.

HOW MUCH: Free

Harlequin Productions' Sanctuary City

Kudos to Harlequin for producing this unflinchingly topical new play about two undocumented and perhaps star-crossed teen-agers. The company's website (harlequinproductions.org/show/sanctuary-city) describes *Sanctuary*, written by Pulitzer winner Martyna Majok and directed by Aaron Lamb, as "a story of borders — visible and invisible — that divide us all."

WHEN & WHERE: On stage from Friday, Oct. 9, to Sunday, Oct. 25, at the State Theater, 202 4th Ave. E., Olympia, running in repertory with Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*.

HOW MUCH: Tickets are \$35-\$49.

Tig Notaro

Notaro is among Rolling Stone's picks for the 50 best stand-up comics of all time (rollingstone.com/culture/culture-lists/50-best-stand-up-comics-of-all-time-126359). She's also an Emmy and Grammy nominee, and her tale about getting locked in a Sacramento hotel room (thisamericanlife.org/826/unprepared-for-what-has-already-happened/act-two-13) is unforgettable.

WHEN & WHERE: Her Olympia appearance, part of her *Out of Nowhere* tour, begins at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13, at The Washington Center for the Performing Arts, 512 Washington St. SE, Olympia.

HOW MUCH: Tickets are \$43-\$95.

The Olympia Peace Choir's Nothing Between Us

The choir's first concert under the leadership of Matthew Melendez will be an a cappella program performed in the Capitol rotunda, renowned for its *Reverberation*. "Reverberation actually erases some of the distance between singer and listener," Melendez said. "The sound doesn't travel at you there; it arrives around you."

WHEN & WHERE: 2 p.m. in the Washington State Capitol, 215 Sid Snyder Ave. SW, Olympia.

HOW MUCH: Free

SPSCC Fine Art Postcard Exhibition

(Submission deadline Dec. 11): Yes, I'm suggesting that you, no matter you are, make art for this impressively inclusive gallery show. Anyone with \$5 to spend on the entry fee can submit 1-3 postcard-sized pieces to be shown and sold to raise money for the South Puget Sound Community College's Leonor R. Fuller Gallery (spscc.edu/art-gallery).

WHEN & WHERE: The exhibition is open from Monday, Jan. 4, to Friday, Feb. 5, in the gallery, in the Kenneth J. Minnaert Center for the Arts, 2011 Mottman Road SW, Olympia.

HOW MUCH: Free

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Studio West's EDGE at Arts Walk, Courtesy of Olympia Parks, Arts & Recreation



OUR TOWN

By Thornton Wilder



SANCTUARY CITY

By Martyna Majok

Directed by Aaron Lamb · Our Town: October 2 – November 1 · Sanctuary City: October 9 – 25

HARLEQUIN

HarlequinProductions.org 360-786-0151



A Sherlock Carol

By Mark Shanahan

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OCTOBER 15

**A Spirited
Manor**

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Kate
Dunster

October 23 - Nov. 8



CHRISTMAS TOWN

A HOLIDAY STORY

By WAYNE ROWLEY

Nov. 27-
Dec. 24

**The
Birds**
by Conor
McPherson

March
12-28
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May 7-23
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2026 Fall/Winter Theatre



ANNEX THEATRE (SEATTLE)

WHAT & WHEN: *Ratcage*: October 9-24. Check website for times.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: 1100 E Pike St, Seattle
Check website for cost.

LEARN MORE: annextheatre.org



OLYMPIA FAMILY THEATER

WHAT & WHEN: *The Luna Sisters of Element*: October 17-18
Check website for times.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: 612 4th Ave E Olympia
Check website for cost.

LEARN MORE: olyft.org



BALLET NORTHWEST

WHAT & WHEN:

Ballet Victoria's Alice in Wonderland. November 7,
The Nutcracker. December 11 - 20, *Olympia Dance Festival*.
February 27, 2027.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: The Washington Center.
Check website for ticket prices.

LEARN MORE: balletnorthwest.org



OLYMPIA LITTLE THEATRE

WHAT & WHEN:

Baskerville: October 23 - November 8, *The Gifts of the Magi*
December 4 - 20, *Time Stands Still*: January 22 - February 7
2027, *Four Old Broadway*: March 5 - 21, 2027.

Check website for times.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: Olympia Little Theatre, 1925 Miller Ave
NE, Olympia. Check website for ticket prices.

LEARN MORE: olympialittletheater.org



HARLEQUIN

WHAT & WHEN: *Our Town*: October 2 - November 1.

Performed in repertory with: *Sanctuary City*: October 9 - 25,
Harlequin Miscast! November 14 - 15, *A Sherlock Carol*
November 27 - December 24. *Octopus's Garden*: January 22 -
February 7, 2027, *Agatha Christie's Murder On The Links*: March
12 - April 4, 2027. Check website for times.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: The State Theater, 202 4th Ave E,
Olympia. Check website for cost.

LEARN MORE: harlequinproductions.org



OLY THEATER

WHAT & WHEN:

Aaron Foster - Mostly Jokes October 15,

CTE Youth Classes:

Musical Theater Choir - Tuesdays, September 7 - October 8

Improv Comedy - Wednesdays, September 7 - October 8

Group Acting Classes - Mondays, September 7 - October 8

Movement for Theater - Thursdays, September 7 - October 8

TAO's *A Spirited Manor*: October 23 - November 8,

Battle Ground Productions' *Christmastown*: November 27 -
December 24.

TAO's *The Birds*: March 12 - 28, 2027

WHERE: Oly Theater at the Jefferson St. Arts Center, 412
Jefferson St SE. (In the former Johansen Olympia Dance Center)

LEARN MORE: olytheater.com

2026 Fall/Winter Theatre Continued



LAKEWOOD PLAYHOUSE (LAKEWOOD)

WHAT & WHEN:

The Docent: October 9 - 25, **Where Blooming Flowers Meet The Sky:** December 4 - 19, **Luchadora!** December 5 - 20, **Top Dog/Underdog:** February 19 - March 7, 2027

WHERE & HOW MUCH: 5729 Lakewood Towne Center Blvd SW, Lakewood. Check website for ticket prices.

LEARN MORE: Lakewoodplayhouse.org



TACOMA LITTLE THEATRE

WHAT & WHEN:

Arsenic and Old Lace: October 16 - November 1, **Hallmarked:** December 4 - 27, **A Christmas Carol:** December 14 - 15, **Dot:** February 5 - 21, 2-27, **Urinetown:** March 26 - April 18, 2027.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: Tacoma Little Theatre, 210 N I Street, Tacoma. Check website for ticket prices.

LEARN MORE: tacomalittletheatre.com



PARAMOUNT THEATER (SEATTLE)

WHAT & WHEN:

Water for Elephants: October 6 - 11, **Oh Mary!:** November 3 - 8, **The Outsiders:** November 27 - December 6, **Disney's Beauty and the Beast:** December 22 - January 3, 2027, **Hadestown:** January 19 - 24, **The Whos Tommy:** March 16 - 21. Check website for times

WHERE & HOW MUCH: 911 Pine Street Seattle. Check website for cost.

LEARN MORE: seattle.broadway.com



TACOMA MUSICAL PLAYHOUSE

WHAT & WHEN:

Les Misérables: September 11 - October 4, **A Christmas Story:** November 20 - December 13, **Next To Normal:** February 19 - March 14, 2027, **Big Fish:** April 2 - 25, 2027. Check website for times.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: 7116 6th Ave. Tacoma. Check website for ticket prices.

LEARN MORE: tmp.org



SEATTLE REP (SEATTLE)

WHAT & WHEN:

Eureka Day: September 14 - November 15, **Eulogy:** September 24 - October 10, **Peter Pan Goes Wrong:** November 27 - January 3, **The Best Christmas Pageant Ever:** December 11 - 20, **John Proctor Is The Villain:** January 21 - February 21, **Intimate Apparel:** February 18 - March 21.

Check website for times.

WHERE & HOW MUCH: 155 Mercer Street Seattle. Check website for cost.

LEARN MORE: seattlerep.org



TAPROOT THEATRE

WHAT & WHEN:

Conscience: September 16 - October 17. **Fannie:** January 20 - February 20, 2027, **Sense & Sensibility:** March 17 - April 24, 2027. Check website for times and cost.

WHERE: Jewel Mainstage, 204 N 85th St. Seattle

LEARN MORE: taproottheatre.org



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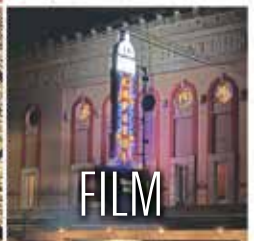
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OlyPages: Intersection of Craft and Community

by Diane Chiddister

When Star Wuerdemann moved to the Olympia area a few years ago, she looked for a meeting place that combined writing and community. A lifelong writer who has moved frequently, she always sought a place that connects writers to each other; sometimes, she found it. But in Olympia, she came up short.

Wuerdemann recalled recently the advice given by Andrea Griffith, the owner of Browsers Bookshop, when she talked of her struggle to find a writing community.

“Andrea said, ‘Sometimes you have to start it yourself.’”

Now Wuerdemann is doing just that. In September she’s launching OlyPages, a writing arts studio. Located on the second floor of the historic Olympia Hardware building downtown, the new studio offers an ambitious schedule of classes and events.

Recently she had just finished hauling boxes of new chairs up to the studio. The chairs are heavy (she can confirm this!), solidly built and cushioned. The idea, she said, is for the chairs to be so comfortable that those sitting “do not have to think about them.”

Everything about OlyPages seems to reflect this level of thoughtfulness. For instance, while long tables near the front are intended for writing, at the opposite end there are only cushions on the floor. It’s a “flexible space,” Wuerdemann said, and will be used for OlyPages’ first event, “Writing Mindfully: Writing and Meditation” on Sunday, Sept. 13.

The overlapping of writing and meditation is a subject close to Wuerdemann’s heart, since she’s been a student of writer and Zen teacher Natalie Goldberg.

Her Buddhist background also led Wuerdemann to offer some classes/events for free. For instance, in the first week OpenPages (free) activities include Writing Mindfully, the (Nearly) Silent Writing Club and a presentation, “Ask an Editor,” by Kevin Breen.

“I wanted people to come experience writing without having to pay for it,” Wuerdemann said, though donations are gratefully accepted.

StudioPages (for-a-fee) classes in the first weeks include a five-week Accountability Workshop taught by Wuerdemann; a Memoir Workshop with Nicole Hardy; a Query Boot Camp with Ari Koontz; and a Short Story Workshop with Kevin Breen.



OlyPages founder Star Wuerdemann at the new writing arts studio site, the historic Olympia Hardware building downtown. The new studio offers a combination of OpenPages (free) and StudioPages (fee-based) events so that writing is available to everyone. An open house for OlyPages will take place Friday, Sept. 18, at 6 p.m. – Photo by Brooks Wuerdemann.

Writing and community go together, Wuerdemann believes, because the act of writing often involves telling the story of one’s life. “Great writing classes become a cohort of support,” Wuerdemann said.

This support flows from the vulnerability of people sharing their stories with each other. “Once you hear someone’s story, even if you don’t like them, you learn to love their humanity,” she said.

This mutual support blossomed when Wuerdemann, following Griffith's advice, took her first step two years ago toward creating a writers' community in Olympia. Held upstairs at Browsers, the (Nearly) Silent Writing Club is a monthly gathering open to everyone. The event begins with all attendees weighing in on a writing-related topic suggested by Wuerdemann, followed by an hour of silent writing.

Wuerdemann had no idea how it would go, or whether anyone would show up. But show up they did, with up to 25 attending each month. "It's been a resounding success," she said. "Not the numbers so much as the quality of what happens."

The support of Griffith has been key to the success of both the (Nearly) Silent Writers Club and the launch of OlyPages.

"If not for Andrea's generosity, OlyPages would not have happened," Wuerdemann said. Funding for OlyPages will rely on donations; initially, she's used an inheritance from her father, who died two years ago, to launch the studio. He'd be proud of her, she said, and it's hard that he's not here.

Having recently completed her first novel, Wuerdemann has published articles and a short story. She has a degree in English Language and Literature, and has taught at the college level. Along with being a lifelong writer, she's a student of Chinese medicine, with a masters in acupuncture and a small local acupuncture practice. Surprisingly, the study of Chinese medicine aligns with her interest in writing, in that it also focuses on how humans function in the world.

"My whole education has been a study in character development," she said.

She brings all of that expertise to OlyPages, along with excitement about what can happen when writers get together to share their stories, such as the beginning discussion of each (Nearly) Silent Writing Club.

"By the time we go around the circle, something shifts," she said. "We're no longer just people in the same room; now we're a group. There's that sense of belonging."

WHAT: OlyPages Writing Arts Studio

WHERE: 111 Capitol Way N. (historic Olympia Hardware building), Suite 200

WHEN: A variety of classes/events beginning September 13; an Open House takes place Friday, Sept. 18 at 6 p.m.

HOW MUCH: OpenPages events are free; StudioPages are fee-based.

LEARN MORE: olypages.org



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