

Hanif Abdurraqib

Tuesday, September 16
Luth Concert Hall
Prior Presents 2025–26

PRIOR
Performing Arts Center

Welcome

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2025-26 season of the Prior Presents series as the new *Nancy Savage Skinner '79* Director of the amazing Prior Performing Arts Center at the College of the Holy Cross. I'd like to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude for the leadership of Professor Kyle Frisina, who served as Interim Director of the Center from its physical opening in the fall of 2022 through this last May. So many critical cornerstones were firmly planted during her tenure and I am blessed to be able to inherit such a stout structure.

The season opens with an enlightening two-day residency with poet, essayist, and cultural critic Hanif Abdurraqib. Mr. Abdurraqib is known for how he explores the history of expression, its change (and often erasure) and his unique ability to archive in wonderful detail one inch of that change at a time. He shares the places and people he loves from many different angles in beautiful and personal detail. Having talked about how the creation of a work of writing is a relationship and personal learning experience, he now sets his work free, giving that work "its best life" for us lucky readers and, in this case, ears in the room.

During his stay, Mr. Abdurraqib will spend time with the students of Professor Nadine Knight's "African American Literature and Culture" class, discuss poetry and the craft of writing with Professor Oliver de la Paz and the students of the Creative Writing Program, and explore his relationship with popular music and our collective personal and cultural relationship to music with Professor Joseph Nelson's "American Music" class in a fireside chat moderated by Professor Frisina.

In tonight's flagship public lecture, Mr. Abdurraqib will explore his sensibilities and relationship to time and place, the structure and function of sound, his beloved and artistic terroir of eastside Columbus, Ohio, and the content and journey from his initial "Draft .5" to completed effort of his most recent release, *There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension*. Thereafter, Dr. Tita Feraud-King '15, Director of Inclusive Excellence for the Division of Justice, Equity, Belonging & Identity, will moderate a Q&A with the audience. Finally, in partnership with Worcester's TidePool BookShop, Mr. Abdurraqib will be available for book signings in the Prior lobby, affectionately known as "The Beehive."

Thank you for joining us this evening. Please join us for more offerings throughout the season!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey de Caen
Nancy Savage Skinner '79 Director
Prior Performing Arts Center

Biography

Hanif Abdurraqib is a poet, essayist, and cultural critic from Columbus, Ohio. His poetry has been published in *Muzzle*, *Vinyl*, *PEN American*, and various other journals. His essays and music criticism have been published in *The FADER*, *Pitchfork*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*.

Hanif's newest release, *There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension* (Random House, 2024) is a poignant, personal reflection on basketball, life, and home. The book was a #1 national bestseller, a New York Times bestseller, and longlisted for both the National Book Award and the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction.

His first full length poetry collection, *The Crown Ain't Worth Much*, was released in June 2016 from Button Poetry. It was named a finalist for the Eric Hoffer Book Prize, and was nominated for a Hurston-Wright Legacy Award. His first collection of essays, *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us*, was released in winter 2017 by Two Dollar Radio and was named a book of the year by *Buzzfeed*, *Esquire*, *NPR*, *Oprah Magazine*, *Paste*, *CBC*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Pitchfork*, and *The Chicago Tribune*, among others.

He released *Go Ahead In The Rain: Notes To A Tribe Called Quest* with University of Texas press in February 2019. The book became a *New York Times* Bestseller, was a finalist for the Kirkus Prize, and was longlisted for the National Book Award. His second collection of poems, *A Fortune For Your Disaster*, was released in 2019 by Tin House, and won the 2020 Lenore Marshall Prize.

His book, *A Little Devil In America* (Random House, 2021) was a winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal and the Gordon Burn Prize, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pen/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award.

In 2021, Abdurraqib was named a MacArthur Fellow, and in 2024 was named a Windham-Campbell Prize recipient. He is a graduate of Beechcroft High School.



The Prior Performing Arts Center

An uncommon commons for transformative experiences with the arts

Prior Presents

The keystone of the Prior Performing Arts Center's public-facing programming, Prior Presents merges thrilling live events by visiting artists with robust educational and outreach activities. Defined by exceptional artistic quality, interdisciplinary impulses, and the potential to spark both wonder and reflection, this annual series celebrates artistic risk-taking and the exchange of ideas and perspectives from around the globe. Short- and long-term visiting artist residencies include performances, artist talks, installations, workshops, and experiential learning opportunities for Holy Cross students and the greater Worcester community.

The internationally acclaimed artists of current and previous seasons embody our vision for artist residencies at The Prior Performing Arts Center. Their performances and lectures offer an exhilarating complement to the creativity and innovation of emerging student artists and Holy Cross faculty and staff also featured in our season this year.



1) Rhiannon Giddens in concert | Spring 2024; 2) Compagnie Hervé Koubi | Spring 2024

Stay in touch!



Scan to sign up for our email list and stay up to date with announcements and upcoming events from The Prior Performing Arts Center.

Upcoming Prior Presents Events



Papermoon Puppet Theatre *Puno, Sewing Memories*

A new program from the Papermoon Puppet Theatre Company of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, *Puno, Sewing Memories* tells the story of Tala, a young girl coping with her father's passing, through a poignant performance with astonishing modernist puppets.

Sep 25 & 26 @ 7:30 p.m. | Tickets \$35 | \$45 | \$55



American Patchwork Quartet

A potent symbol of unity in diversity, the American Patchwork Quartet draws influences from American folk, jazz and country as well as West African and East Asian styles to blend tradition and innovation in a celebration of America's cultural mosaic. A co-presentation with historic local arts presenter Music Worcester.

Nov 14 @ 7:30 p.m. | Tickets \$35 | \$45 | \$55



Marie Basse-Wiles & Omari Wiles *Djapo*

Rooted in the rhythms of Senegal and Mali, *Djapo* combines traditional West African dance with contemporary African club culture, Afrobeats, and live percussion shaped through the collaboration of celebrated dance artists and mother/son duo Marie Basse-Wiles and Omari Wiles.

Nov 21 @ 7:30 p.m. | Tickets \$35 | \$45 | \$55



Scan to purchase tickets and learn more about our schedule of upcoming presentations.

Currently at the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery



The Vietnamese Áo Dài in a Time of War: Fashion, Citizenship, and Nationalism (1954-1975)

This exhibition explores the significance of Vietnam's national costume—the áo dài—during the Vietnam War. Honoring the 50th anniversary of a conflict, the legacies of which continue to haunt us to this day, the exhibition highlights the contributions of Vietnamese women to politics, society, and culture.

Open now through Dec 19

Upcoming Events from the Academic Arts at Holy Cross

Six Characters in Search of an Author

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DANCE. In this production of Luigi Pirandello's 1921 modern classic from the Department of Theatre & Dance, a theatre company preparing their latest production is disrupted by the appearance of six figures who claim to be characters abandoned by their author.

Oct 30 - Nov 9

Working Writers Series: Ferris Jabr

CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM. Ferris Jabr, New York Times-bestselling author of *Becoming Earth*, will read from and discuss his work followed by a Q&A in this Working Writers Series presentation from the Creative Writing Program.

Nov 13 @ 7:30 p.m.

Pamela Z: Recital & Lecture-Demonstration

DEPARTMENTS OF MUSIC AND COMPUTER SCIENCE. Pamela Z, a pioneering composer, performer, and interdisciplinary artist, blends live looping, extended vocal techniques, and custom-designed, gesture-controlled music technology to create interactive, multilayered performances that fuse sound, image, and movement. Join us for two public events as of her five-day residency with the Departments of Music and Computer Science as a *Distinguished Visiting Practitioner*.

Lecture-Demonstration: Sep 30 @ 5:30 p.m.

Recital: Oct 2 @ 8 p.m.



Scan to purchase tickets and learn more about our schedule of upcoming presentations.

Prior Performing Arts Center Staff

Jeffrey de Caen, *Nancy Savage Skinner '79* Director

ARTIST ENGAGEMENT

Marta Beyer, Manager of Artistic and Engagement Initiatives

PRODUCTION SERVICES

Brenda Shepard, Manager of Production
Matthew Freije, Pro Audio/Video Supervisor
Christine Goguen, Costume Shop Manager
Stephen McGonagle, Technical Director
Judi Olson, Costume Shop Assistant
Mason Parece, Production Technician
Betsy Pierce, Assistant Technical Director

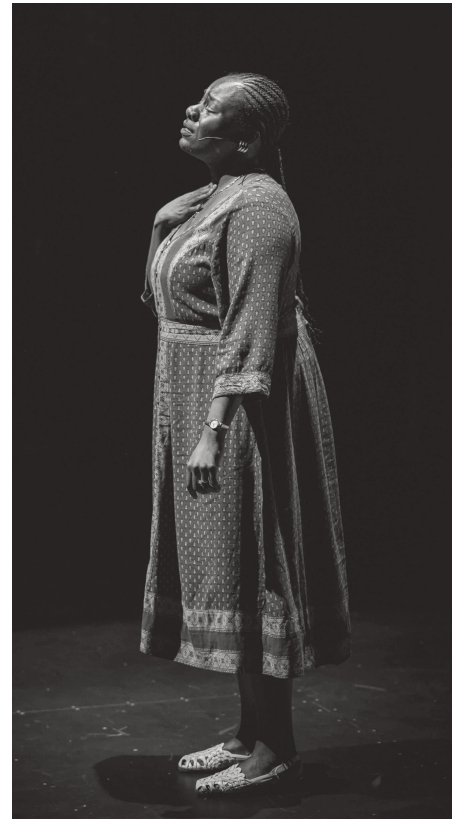
PATRON ENGAGEMENT & OPERATIONS

Katrina Lewonczyk, Manager of Operations & Administration
Ethan Bates, Arts Marketing & Communications Manager
Evan Crocker, Event & Front of House Manager
Morgan Fitzpatrick, Office Coordinator

STUDENT STAFF

Students play a crucial role in the operation of the Prior Performing Arts Center, working as Production Assistants, Front of House Assistants, and more:

Adele Feldberg, Alyshia Solomon, Andrea Gomez, Angela Almanza, Anna Rowley, Brigit O'Connell, Camila Müller-Juez, Elise O'Neill, Emily Fox, Emma Buchanan, Frank Amuso, Gabriellie De Gouveia, Gracie Lopez, Jamie Schmid, Jazmin Lopez, Kiera Ryan, Laurel Deneen, Maya Pinto, Morgan Kane, Nadia Frempong, Natalia Salinas, Rose Knoll, Sophia Rowley, Adelaide Abstoss, Alejandro Irizarry, Alexa Rodriguez Villatoro, Atiya Woolman, Billy Suter, Brandon Curtis, Daniel Hickey, Eliza Simpson, Emelia Jones, Emily Karlson, Emma Butler, Fiona Nelson, Gail Durkin, Gracyn Epstein, Irene Mandile, Jake Sidell, Joshua Love, Julia Divine, Katelyn Murphy, Lee (Leah) Varela, Lily Jaramillo, Luis Ramirez, Margaret DeWald, Maxim Tereshchenko, Melina Valencia, Meredith Brady, Meredith Shaw, Natalie Gasowski, Nevaeh Fleming, Osmaly Bonilla, Paige Thomson, Phoebe Wong, Piper Guiney, Savannah Rhodes, Scarlett Dawson, Sebastian Torres, Sofia Corvo, Solar (Ciara) Bello, Sophia Tran, Sophia Suffoletto, Sophie Sundaram, Vivian Higgins, Xiaoyi Wang, Yasmin Fernandez



Snapshots from last season: Prior Presents 2024–25

Clockwise from top left: 1) Camille A. Brown & Dancers | September 12, 2024; 2) Johnny Gandelsman, violin | September 26, 2024; 3) Aimee Nezhukumatathil | October 3, 2024; 4) Mfoniso Udofia's *Sojourners* | November 19, 2024; 5) Julia Keefe Indigenous Big Band | November 22, 2024; 6) The Acting Company (Burncoat Middle School visit) | February 10, 2025; 7) Jeremy Flower with Jeremy Udden | February 27, 2025; 8) Jha D Amazi of MASS Design Group | March 18, 2025.

Photography by Troy B. Thompson (images 1-6), Mike McMath (image 7) and Caroline Axvig (image 8).