



STAGES

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ENGLERT THEATRE

Winter 2017

Speaking to the Spirits

A Q&A WITH TENNESSEE SINGER-
SONGWRITER VALERIE JUNE

PAGE 12

In Conversation with Tommy Emmanuel

DANIEL BOSCALJON INTERVIEWS
MASTER GUITARIST TOMMY
EMMANUEL AHEAD OF HIS RETURN
TO THE ENGLERT STAGE

PAGE 16

In Rotation

ENGLERT SOUND ENGINEER PETE
BECKER REFLECTS ON HIS LIFE WITH
TOM PETTY'S DISCOGRAPHY

PAGE 8



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Welcome to The Englert Theatre

I sat hunched over in my chair in the back hallway of the DIY art space RADInc. with twenty other people listening to Tymika Lawrence as she orated a living essay. I processed her words, trying to make sense of the multiple threads she had unstitched before us; the truth of her vision was both freeing and crippling. She unfurled what it meant to be a person of color living in America from the perspective of a person of color not from America but now an American—both an immigrant and a citizen, like many others on this land. She explored what it meant to confront one's understanding of their own identity; we witnessed an evolution of her character in real-time. It stunned us and immediately—all of us different people, different perspectives in that room—we experienced a shared empathy. In that snap moment, we were a Polaroid of the power of art, the revelatory strength of truth. When she finished, we clapped as we would clap for a master storyteller or performer. Tymika, though, does not identify first as an artist but rather as an innovator and leader

in the global coffee industry. She had stepped away from her work and life in Manhattan to share this art with us, this treatise she had been developing for months between the meetings, research, and presentations she has to do for her job. We were at Witching Hour, our annual local festival that pulls artists and thinkers from all walks, those we've heard of and those hidden behind the machinations of daily life.

As administrators and patrons, we spend quite a bit of time extolling the importance of supporting working artists and great arts. We honor artistic leaders and their essential contributions with attendance at performances, the purchase of media, and the bestowing of awards. All of that is important: we must recognize the great work of our best artists. Though it's possible that we sometimes forget to acknowledge our own work—us citizens who paint, write, sing, dance, and wield cameras: the regular folk. I am perpetually guilty of placing great attention on our public artistic heroes. (At the aforementioned Witching Hour festival, I couldn't stop talking about poet/truth-teller Danez Smith, comedian Aparna Nancherla, and violist Nadia Sirota.) I fail to note that equally revelatory moments are found in the work and process of those of us making art on the ground, out of spotlights. I must pause myself and remember that **our mission at the Englert is to inspire and activate positive community growth** through the arts. That isn't just Philip Glass playing etudes on our stage or Colson Whitehead reading his work or Wu Fei introducing us to a cross-cultural blend of sounds on an ancient instrument: it's actually a local composer (lawyer-by-day) performing a new collection of minimalist piano figures in her living room to neighbors or a writer reading her first set of personal essays to a warm crowd at the Iowa Writers' House or a young, local guitarist eliciting otherworldly improvisations from a compellingly unorthodox network of amplifiers and pedals at the Trumpet Blossom Cafe.

How our citizens engage the process of making art is as important as seeing what visiting artists have already made. A young, committed community member talked with me earlier in the fall about the idea of building a new performance venue in our town. The citizen emphatically wanted us (Iowa City) to be bigger on the map, to have more notable artists coming through our town so that we wouldn't be seen as less than Chicago, Denver, or Minneapolis. Their enthusiasm was certainly captivating, and yes, it would be cool to have a venue and community that could support a show from an artist like Chance the Rapper or LCD Soundsystem. While potentially life-affirming, those kinds of events don't necessarily define communities as much as the creativity and innovation generated by actual community members. You can have as many arenas, beautifully restored opera houses, and slick modern theaters as you want but if your citizenry is culturally devoid, unplugged from their own innovation, then the future is opaque.

I am not suggesting that Iowa City is the beacon of community-based creativity but rather seeking to establish that our mission to activate creativity is real: it's a goal, which when met, reaps glorious rewards across generations. I am certain we will get there and to do our part, the work at the Englert must also be centered around encouraging young people as well as us older people to engage our inner artists. Watching Tymika Lawrence at Witching Hour—an impressive coffee industry mover during the week and a burgeoning artist finding her voice on the weekend—served as both an affirmation that we are sometimes moving in the right direction and a nudge that we need to keep chasing similar opportunities. To find Lawrence in a lineup, nestled between the known and regarded likes of Smith, Nancherla, and Sirota, reminded me how important that all of us, in whatever form it takes, must continue to make things, to explore our creativity, to seek out our truths. Ultimately, our passions define the character of our community.

Sincerely,
Andre Perry

Executive Director

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THE ENGLERT THEATRE

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IN ROTATION: TOM PETTY

ENGLERT SOUND ENGINEER PETE BECKER REFLECTS ON HIS
LIFE WITH TOM PETTY'S DISCOGRAPHY

PAGE 8

SPEAKING TO THE SPIRITS

A Q&A WITH TENNESSEE SINGER-SONGWRITER VALERIE
JUNE ON THE LIVING NATURE OF SONGS AND FINDING HER
VOICE IN THE STUDIO

PAGE 12

TOMMY EMMANUEL

"[THE GUITAR] IS PROBABLY, APART FROM MY CHILDREN,
MY MOST NATURAL CRADLE." THE CERTIFIED GUITAR
PLAYER SHARES HIS LIFELONG LOVE OF GUITARS OLD AND
NEW.

PAGE 16

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ENGLERT

WRITER DANIEL BOSCALJON ON SEEING A WINGED
VICTORY FOR THE SULLEN PERFORM AT MISSION CREEK
FESTIVAL 2015 AND THE SALIENCE OF WITNESSING ART
LIVE

PAGE 24

**FRESH FOOD
CONCEPTS**

PAGE 22

**FRIENDS OF
THE ENGLERT**

PAGE 34

**ENGLERT
COMMISSIONS**

PAGE 46

**HISTORY OF
THE ENGLERT**

PAGE 54

**AUDIENCE
GUIDELINES**

PAGE 56

A man with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket, is playing a violin. He is looking down at the instrument. The background is a solid blue color with some faint, light blue dots scattered across it.

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LISTEN LOCAL



In Rotation: Tom Petty

BY PETE BECKER, MONITOR ENGINEER

I was sitting at the recording console in the middle of a particularly positive mixing session with a dear friend and musical co-collaborator in the Solon-based studio where we work when my phone started buzzing like mad with texts from friends far and wide on the afternoon of October 2, 2017. I was immediately grateful to be in the studio making music with a friend at this moment because the music-related news coming in was grim and within the hour I'd be struggling to keep myself from all-out sobbing on my bicycle ride back to the Englert Theatre. We'd all suddenly just lost the life and incomparable talent of legendary songwriter and musician Tom Petty, one week after he and his band the Heartbreakers had triumphantly completed a massive tour celebrating their 40th successful year in the music industry. It's very difficult, and feels somewhat futile, to try and fit all of this into just a few paragraphs, but what I mean to try and illuminate here is how his influence and impact on the lives of millions of people around the world over the last four decades is simply immeasurable.

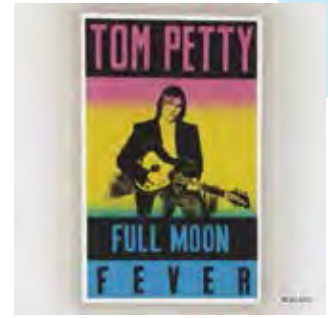
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HIM
PERSONALLY, AND YET I HAD
UNQUESTIONABLY JUST LOST
A LIFELONG FRIEND.

On my bike, I was pummeled again and again by deeply-embedded memories of so many important moments in my life that were defined in my heart by numerous Tom Petty songs. All I could do was to think of the many dear friends who have shared similar experiences down the years and knew that they were also likely in an unexpected and confused state of intense mourning at that very moment, wherever they might be. I didn't even know him personally, and yet I had unquestionably just lost a lifelong friend. As I write this, I realize my reminiscing and reflecting on music is very much a Tom Petty thing, as he himself once sang: "Maybe somewhere down the road a ways, you'll think of me and wonder where I am these days. Maybe somewhere down the road when somebody plays 'Purple



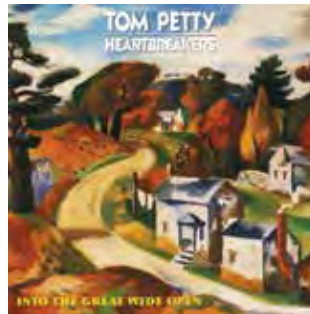
**The Traveling Wilburys
(Vol.1)**

The Traveling Wilburys, 1988



Full Moon Fever

Tom Petty (solo), 1989



Into the Great Wide Open

Tom Petty and the
Heartbreakers, 1991



Wildflowers

Tom Petty (solo), 1994



**(Songs and Music from)
She's the One**

Tom Petty and the
Heartbreakers, 1996

**Note from Pete: Please keep in mind that these selections only represent a short eight-year span of Tom Petty's incredible 40-year career. There is so, so much more to enjoy but this is a great place to start.*

Haze.” I didn’t have headphones with me, so I just played his music as loud as I could in my head and let the tears stream down my face while doing my best not to ride my bike directly into a ditch.

As a record producer, it’s pretty fast and easy for me to say that both his work and his beautifully honest, humorous character may have informed my education on the craft and on living life more than any other consistent influence over the years. I was born the same year that his band was born. I felt lucky to have grown up with his songs making up so very much of the soundtrack to my life. There is great comfort in knowing that this is a sentiment shared by millions. Since his passing, a number of bands who have graced the stage here at the Englert in recent weeks have chosen to forgo their carefully crafted pre- and post-show playlists in favor of simply playing his albums on the PA system for the crowds. Even some bands’ encores have become full-on intimate acoustic performances of heartwarming Petty signatures around a single microphone to the audience’s bittersweet delight.

In a somewhat similar fashion, for this issue of *Stages*, I was asked to submit a list of my favorite current albums by bands that I respect. Instead, in his honor, I’ve created a short chronological list of the albums that Tom Petty made with his friends when this very excited little boy just happened to be between the ages of about 11 and 19. My earliest memory of being a Tom Petty fan is the one of me dancing in my pajamas on the living room couch in 1988 when one of his bands, the Traveling Wilburys, were nominated for a Grammy Award and my mother somehow let me stay up late enough to watch it happen on TV.

I’m listing these albums here just in case you don’t know about them. Or maybe seeing the mere mention of their titles and album art makes you smile or well up with tears of joy because you, too, were touched by them at some point in your life. If you aren’t familiar, hopefully reading this will inspire you to search out and purchase these albums at the local record store and have them become a part of your life’s soundtrack, as they surely have for myself and so many countless others. ■

Rest in peace, Tom Petty (1950–2017)

Thank you for everything.



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Speaking to the Spirits: A Q&A with Valerie June

BY DANIEL BOSCALJON

Touring for her new album, the remarkable *The Order of Time*, Tennessee's Valerie June will appear at the Englert on February 19, 2018 at 8:00 p.m. The daughter of a concert promoter who prepped rooms for Bobby Womack and other artists, June grew up singing at home and in her church. June has found many collaborators on her path to her genre-defying solo career, including The Old Crow Medicine Show, Dan Auerbach (of the Black Keys), and Meshell Ndegeocello. With a timeless voice and sound, June translates life, loss, love, triumph, and suffering into a musical language that feels intimately familiar and cosmically vast.

One of your standout attributes as an

artist is your ability to effortlessly blend disparate musical genres—Appalachian folk, blues, gospel, soul—into a truly unique, distinctive sound. Can you describe how genres sound to you when you hear them? How do you hear beneath the things to find the commonality? Whenever I listen to a purist or traditionalist in a certain form and hear how they dedicated themselves—I respect it. But as an artist I hear a lot of influences and styles in one genre. When I listen to soul I hear country, when I listen to bluegrass I hear blues, when I listen to blues I hear rock. Because I hear things that way, it is natural I create that way. I love that people do one thing—people have to do that in the world, to focus on one form. But the artists I listen

to find what they love and create something all uniquely their own.

Who do you listen to? Billie Holiday, Alice Coltrane, Dolly Parton, any of these amazing women. I was doing Farm Aid with Sheryl Crow. And Tank and the Bangas! She's from New Orleans. They mix everything—her voice goes from a cartoon to a '30s jazz singer to a soul singer in one song. That's the modern music that I love, a person doing what they feel. Norah Jones—I've listened to her for years, from her popular stuff to the jazz to the folk. She has some interesting twists and turns. Tom Waits. Some Nick Drake today because it's raining. I have a candle lit. May make soup to go with it.

Your breakthrough came when you worked with Dan Auerbach on *Pushing Against a Stone*. What about that time was most transformative for who you have become as an artist? It was relevant to being in a studio, to know how producers talk to musicians. Working with Dan—it was him and Kevin Augunas, who invited Richard Swift. He's one of the funniest people on earth. The energy was great. Then Dan invited some guys and we took it where it wanted to go. I was with musicians in a professional studio, and I learned how to act in a room like that. I had never created in a studio. He taught me how to create a record—people don't know the parts of artists being who they are. Some are entertainers, some are songwriters, some are instrumentalists, some are engineers. Most people are musicians who work in the business—they play at home, but they don't share what they do. So this was a side that I was clueless about. Now I know what to expect.

What developments in *The Order of Time* seem most important to you as an artist? Composition? Lyrics? Vocals? Overall sound? What new ground do you feel like the album broke? The first record I was more of an observer—I watched. The second one I came in and I knew what I wanted. From record to record, it's having confidence about working with musicians and bringing color to what is in my imagination. I have to speak to musicians, to tell the drummers to be more cloudy, or

more dark. Matt Marinelli understands what I mean by dusty and cloudy—he translates that to the musicians in technical terms. I just write songs and sing, and I play chords that fit—I don't know if the chord is crazy or E-flat major.

Your songs are really intricate constructions, even though they follow the blues tradition that often has a simple core at the heart. How do you know when a song is done? They don't get done. They don't finish. When you get on the road with a song, it becomes something else. Songs are living: they're never done. They fit in different environments. Some songs like daytime. Some like an operatic theater. Songs are as alive as any human being. They're never finished. They have desires and hopes and wishes. Songs live even after their creators are gone.

How do you feel the songs change in response to the venue? When I'm doing an outdoor festival and I have a 40-minute

SONGS ARE AS ALIVE AS ANY HUMAN BEING. THEY'RE NEVER FINISHED. THEY HAVE DESIRES AND HOPES AND WISHES. SONGS LIVE EVEN AFTER THEIR CREATORS ARE GONE.

set, I want the hard rocking songs and get off the stage. If I try a delicate song without a sound check and the sweet things that need to be heard in my heart and soul and voice—I'm not doing the song any justice. I do "Astral Plane" because people want to hear it.

Closed theaters let me do a song where I can dance and flow and move and feel the song in a flowy sort of way. I can't do it when the sound is lost in the air outdoors. Festivals don't always give what you need. In a theater, you fit the room. You get a sound check, get to find when the songs live. That's another art, what engineers do to get songs particular to the rooms. I've dreamed of having my own venue that's my room, where I know the sound and feel and people come to me.

How do you feel like your music translates to different audiences as you tour? Do you feel like you're able to express the truth of your songs? There are places where my songs—they're not the best home for them. Even times of day affect them, the timing of your set with other things.

There was a show where the opener had a full band and I had a solo show. I'd tried to talk to the opener about that before—but the energy changed after the whole band was there.

How do you prepare yourself for a performance? What do you have in mind when you think about the audience? My focus. When I get there, I get nervous. But then I say, think about the spirits, the spirits who are there. Don't worry about the bodies. Speak to the spirits. If I can do that, I've done my job. ■



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In Conversation With: Tommy Emmanuel

BY DANIEL BOSCALJON

Tommy Emmanuel brings his highly vaunted guitar playing skills to the Englert on February 13, 2018 starting at 7:30 p.m.. Along with Rodney Crowell, a contributor to Emmanuel's newest album *Accomplice One* (arriving in early 2018), Emmanuel will provide a night of entertainment that is centered on, but exceeds, the sound of his guitar. This performance provides an opportunity to witness a living legend who knows his craft with an unparalleled depth. Listening to the easy rumble in his voice as he discussed his love of guitar of sound, the calm and gentle way he described what he was to play, is a lesson in greatness.

I would like to focus this conversation specifically about what it is like for you to play guitar, which you do with an astounding sense of intimacy. Can you describe what it is like to lift a guitar in your arms, in terms of the weight and the shape of it? To me, it's the most natural feeling I know. I'm so used to it. When I pick up a guitar, I have to get a feel for how big it is, the sound of it, how loud it is, how soft it is. It is probably, apart from

my children, my most natural cradle. It's something I pick up and it feels right when I am holding it.

Do you prefer to be standing or sitting when you hold a guitar? I like standing on stage because I can move around and dance around, but I play better when I'm sitting. I tend to sit down on a slow song because I want to draw the audience into the music. Standing up is more showy—particularly for a guy like me. I keep time with my body, I keep the groove with my body as I move it. Sitting, I tap my foot.

When you listen to the sound that a guitar makes, do you listen to what is audible, or are you able to hear the vibrations with your body or fingers? It very much depends on the instrument itself—what are you getting from the instrument? Do you hear it like a full orchestra? Are there frequencies the ears can't hit? A guitar with age—a Martin from the '30s—will give you everything. Some other instruments—a guitar that has a lot of lacquer on it—may not sing as much. I treat it like a voice. When I play certain guitars, I'm looking for a voice.

When I'm doing a duet and I'm the melody player, I look for a pokey, mid-range voice for vibrato. When I'm with a singer, I want something more like a grand piano with a deeper range, and play quieter. It depends on what you need from the instrument.

Where does the sound of a guitar come from, primarily? The actual sound comes out the hole, but resonances happen up the neck and behind as well. You can mic a guitar from where your head is, or where the hole is. It is almost like a speaker out of an amplifier, it pushes sound forward. It is pressure that causes a guitar to make a sound. Certain guitars have pressure built in—a Martin guitar has a lot of pressure, they were designed to be loud. Other guitars aren't as loud but are easier to play. I like guitars with pressure that are easy to play, so I will take a Martin D28 or a D35, take the neck off, shim it at the heel, reset the angle back a little bit—and it takes more ease of playing with the left hand, and that pressure down is what causes the guitar to speak and make a loud noise and you need pressure to make the noise. It leaves the saddle high, and the strings fall back down the fretboard. If you want to play something intricate, you can't fight the instrument.

What is it about your work that enables you to get songs from guitars with such seeming facility? Why do guitars open themselves up to you? It is up to you how you make the instrument sound. I can pick up a cruddy, awful instrument and get a beautiful song out of it because I care. I know how to do it. There are other times when I can pick up a \$60,000 guitar and see that it needs love. You can feel it when you play.

What do you mean by that? When I watch people play who aren't tuned in to the guitar—they can have an expensive guitar but it will sound like shit because of how they play. It all comes back to how you play, even down to the pick you use. I know why my pick sounds better. I spent a lifetime being aware of the sound I get out of a pick. There's also a way of getting a bit out without choking the sound, letting the sound speak. Dylan, when he was young, used Martin or Gibson—the sound he's going for is exactly what he needs to sing over. It isn't what

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Chet Atkins was looking for. Listening to Chet Atkins helped me look for how to get the most of my instrument. He didn't often play steel string acoustic guitar—but when he did, the tone is so spectacular. He coaxes the sound out—his guitar became a voice the moment he started playing. He was a singer when he played.

There are certain instruments made that would cause people to say “ugh” but I could hear it and know that voice and how to use it. I have a Gibson from '33 that is a mojo-producing blues machine—it is good for certain things. It is what I go to for a Reinhardt tune from the '30s. I don't have to play it hard. I let the voice come out with the big singing vibrato, get the midrange by using the microphone, and make it sing.

What is it like to use a new guitar that you've never played? How long does it take you to develop a working relationship with it? Here's a good example. Yesterday, I visited a new guitar shop in Nashville, and I had to sign a piece of paper to say that a guitar used to be mine. I spent 20 minutes on a guitar—it made me play Johnny Cash and Elvis and it made me start singing. I loved playing it—I wanted to buy it. It took me less than a minute to become comfortable.

Sometimes I can look at a guitar and know how it will sound—I can see the wood and stuff. I've played guitars all my life, and it is a never-ending fascination. There's nothing I love more than guitars.

What's the best guitar? The one you don't want to put down. If you love it, that's the guitar for you.

Is there a difference between using the guitar of someone you know well versus someone that you have never met? A difference between using a hero's guitar versus a friend's? I know from working with Chet Atkins in the '90s—he's a tinkerer, he knew how to set them up so well, better than anyone. His guitars were beautiful to play. We'd swap them—he loved mine as well. It is another reason why we hit it off—we could spend all day in the workshop. Back in the '70s I would set up and repair guitars, and it was one of my greatest pleasures. I'd have a smile on my face.

How much of yourself do you think you

leave behind in your guitars? I don't know. I think some of the guitars I've played for a long time and put my life into—you can see the work in the instrument, the scratches and the worn parts—you know someone has poured themselves into it. I have guitars that are pristine—I polish them and put new strings on them. It varies. I tend to have guitars that come in and out of my life, like the Gibson I mentioned at the store. I bought it, played it on recordings, and then it was time for the guitar to move on.

What is the difference between learning a new song and learning a new guitar? The new song: you have to commit it to memory and practice it so that not only your brain

"WHEN I PLAY FOR YOU, YOU SHOULDN'T THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE. EVEN IF IT IS FOR 10 MINUTES, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE A NEGATIVE THOUGHT, BUT EXPERIENCE RELIEF FOR THAT." -Tommy Emmanuel

remembers, but your hands remember. The skill has to turn to music: once your focus switches from the skill to the music and the feeling of the music. Until that point, you're performing skills. To perform, you need to have your skills in order, but it shouldn't dictate the music.

When do you feel closest to a guitar? When I play to an audience—because they're really listening. When they really listen, I want to listen as well and give them the best that I possibly can. I'm milking the tone as much as I can out of the instrument, to try to get as much juice as I can from the notes I'm playing, to give the real source of the music. I'm trying to speak through the instrument and change minds, and distract them from whatever troubles they have, to distract them in a way so that they are focused totally on the music, not troubles. When I play for you, you shouldn't think about anything else. Even if it is for 10 minutes, you shouldn't have a negative thought, but experience relief for that. When you can do that for a few hours and take them away

from life, through the magic of music—that's worth getting out of bed for.

What part of the guitar tends to open itself to you first? It is a combination of everything—it's the sound the instrument makes when you play the strings. When it is in tune and it speaks, you want to see what it's like, so you play a song you think you know well and give the instrument a chance to speak and see what it says and how it sounds. Certain instruments have a different kind of midrange, and some speak so well—particularly the guitars with age.

Human voices are all midrange. You want a guitar that speaks in the midrange, so you don't have to hit it hard, and with bass

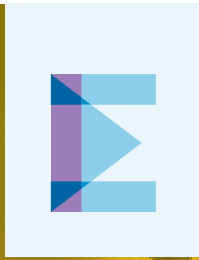
underneath and the shimmering highs on the top. That's why certain sounds are ear candy. I look for all those frequencies.

What is it like to end a relationship with a guitar? Is there a way that you touch it for a

last time that you know will be your last? Guitars are like your friends. Sometimes you have to say goodbye, unfortunately. Life's too short to put all your eggs in one basket. When I was young, I thought I had found one that was irreplaceable—the guy who made the first one made me another that was twice as good. Then that one was the best. You have to remain open. If you're lucky and have a few guitars you have a few voices to choose from. My credits always list the guitar used—which guitar has the best voice.

Sometimes, I'm around collectors who will talk about how rare [a guitar] is—but if you're not in love with it, sell it to someone who might need it. Don't just leave it hanging around.

When you start getting sentimental, it's time to get rid of it. That's not healthy. It's what you need now—I have the Martin guitars. I could survive with one guitar if I had to, but I do like other tones. I don't get precious about things. I always tell myself that it is a hunk of wood. The music has to come from you. ■



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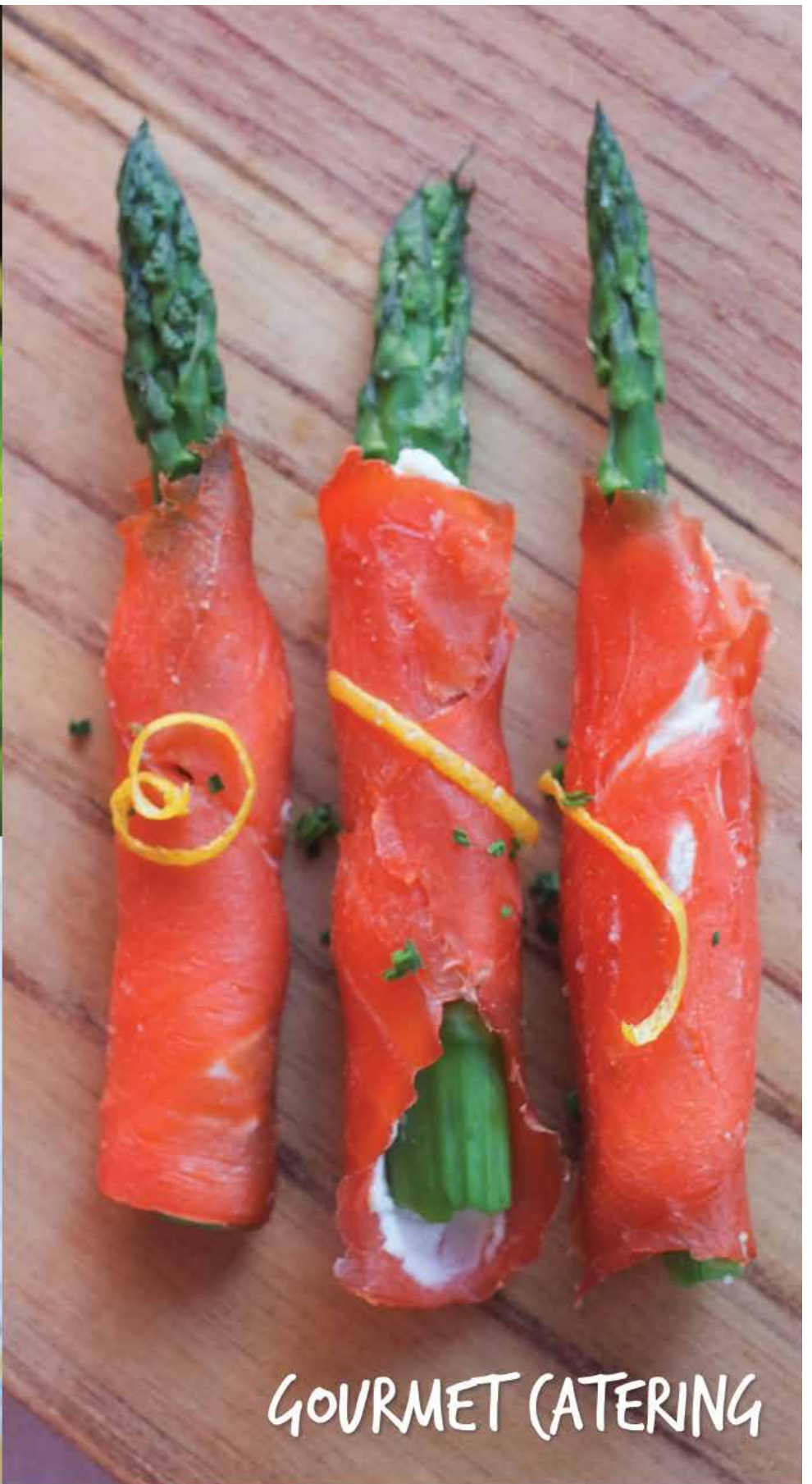
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The Transformation of the Englert

BY DANIEL BOSCALJON

I first entered the Englert during its phase as a movie theater. It was 1996, I was visiting my girlfriend, and we decided to watch *Ransom*, a forgettable Mel Gibson revenge movie. I had become acquainted with the repurposing of old theaters as movie screens. Such spaces can be bittersweet disappointments: like zoos, they offer preservation at the expense of vitality. Nonetheless, I appreciated the ornate flourishes attesting to the place's past grandeur—they allowed me to touch a time when a theater's particularity was more important than the possibility of broad appeal.

I recall being disappointed in the acoustics—the sounds from the other screen bled into the few quiet moments of ours. Beyond acting or script, something

seemed flat about the experience. Unlike restaurants that I'd eaten in that had remade their former space in a tasteful manner, transforming a factory or a church

THE LIGHTS AND SOUNDS MADE THE ENGLERT'S SOUL SPEAK, HOWEVER BRIEFLY, AWAKENING ITS QUIET MAJESTY.

into something that preserved what had been beautiful about its exterior, the repurposing of grand old theaters and opera houses like the Englert seemed to shrink, and thus distort, what these theaters were

intended to be. Most repurposed theaters eventually fell into such disrepair that they were torn down or were updated and altered to become unrecognizable,, but following a communal effort intended to keep it from becoming another downtown nightclub, the Englert reopened in 2004 revived and ready to be used for its original purpose as a house for performing arts. At the time, I had planned on moving from Iowa City in the near future and had felt little responsibility

for preserving a local climate that would not long be mine. The news of the reopening nonetheless stirred something within me akin to patriotism, or civic pride—

it seemed like a Good Thing to Do. The exterior remained largely the same. Watching Callexico perform in 2006 reacquainted me with the interior, when I marveled at the transformation enabled

Englert Volunteers

by the “Save the Englert” campaign and the breathtaking effect of hundreds of volunteers. The space felt like itself again, as though it had been given permission to stop pretending. I felt as though I were honestly invited into it when I sat, as though its center of gravity once more allowed it to gather, or envelop, the audience into something unique. It fostered community.

I have seen a variety of live performances in this restored setting, both in the chairs and occasionally on the stage itself. The bricks of the theater’s back wall, framed by the massive proscenium arch, adds texture to the proceedings lacking in other environments—in fact, bands that I had seen in other venues often offer better performances in this one. In part, to be sure, this is aided by the theater’s acoustics, sound system, and the sophisticated lighting system required by the dramatic features that the space also stages.

When Mission Creek announced that A Winged Victory for the Sullen would play at the Englert, I was overjoyed. I had listened to their two albums repeatedly -- the soundtrack to running, reading, writing, sleeping. It remains one of the most transfixing performances of live music I have ever seen.

March 31, 2015, performance day, arrived. I appeared early, hoping to secure a good seat, and promptly realized that my concerns about the band’s popularity were unfounded—plenty of empty seats remained. A few instruments—piano, drums, cello—waited patiently for their performers to lift them. But those instruments were easily forgotten given the bright beams of blue light that shot from the stage onto the ceiling. Combined with the effects of a fog machine, it felt as though I was in the midst of a spring day. Moreover, my gaze, pulled upward, found that the pillars of light augmented the spaciousness of the theater itself. Its interior seemed more vast, as though the spotlights revealed some internal greatness that the house lights obscured. I noticed others in the theater similarly held rapt: few phones were in use. Almost everyone responded to the invitation to meditate, calmly, on the space at hand. And the space received these meditations, once again merging the audience into a communal whole. We waited, together.

Once the band entered and the music began, I understood the need for the lights. Although their music is generally classified as “neo-classical” or “ambient,” its vastness required the fullness of the room. The low notes of the cello, amplified, resonated ▶ o

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the unseen floor as the strains of the viola, punctuated by the piano's melodies, floated calmly on the surface of the ceiling. The strings, sustained, rippled through the texture of the atmosphere. I felt the vibrations of each note ripple across my body, the deeper chords resonating within my inmost depths. I was summoned to submerge completely within the space of the performance, joining with the others in the audience who, at times, visibly lifted slightly from their seats as though the center of gravity within the theater had altered.

Watching the band perform was a radically different experience of listening alone. This often is true, but more generally because bands improvise as they play or provide a dazzling light show spectacle to accompany the songs. A Winged Victory for the Sullen provided neither of these things: the songs were faithful reproductions of what I had heard at home, and the stark majesty of the lighting was a subtle (although spellbinding) accompaniment. At home, surrounded by my familiar belongings and distracted by the tasks at hand, I had never been able to completely surrender to the strains and movements of each song. That night, I was close enough to the stage to watch the bows sweep and move, and marvel at the technical prowess of each musician. But more than that, the personality of the remade Englert—which invited others to share the rapturous experience with me—made the music complete although I had never found the albums lacking.

The music played in that space knit us together—the space, the audience, the performers—in a radically transcendent way. The vertical nature of the Englert, the soaring heights and sweeping depths of the songs, created a timeless moment that allowed me to conceptualize, however unclearly, what the term “infinite” is meant to suggest. It encompassed us all.

But just as surprising as the Englert's ability to augment the peaceful splendor of the music was the way that the music enriched the space. The lights and sounds made the Englert's soul speak, however briefly, awakening its quiet majesty. It was an atmosphere so suited to the music that nothing was disposable or extraneous. The balcony, the chairs, the curtains, the carpet—all participated in creating a space for awe. The theater became a cathedral intended for no known god, a monument to the human talent for vast magics. But it also translated the music from an epic space beyond human comprehension, an abstracted universality that would have diminished the occasion, into something personal. Intimate. Although the music and space seemed boundless, the band would play only for this hour—and no longer. I would never again see the Englert the same way, opened both into and beyond itself toward an unutterable unknown. ■



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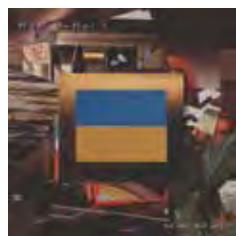
 

LITTLE VILLAGE: Albums that helped in 2017

COMPILED BY MATT STEELE, PUBLISHER, LITTLE VILLAGE

Oh, ‘merica. There is grime in them cog wheels. There is something in the guts. Ain’t right. But we did make some music this year.

In no particular order, here are a few albums from around the state that helped 2017 go down.

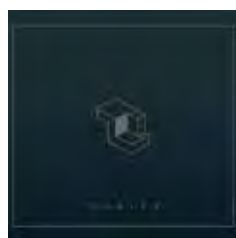


Har-di-har

we will will you

Written during what they called “a season of separation,” *we will will you* by

husband and wife duo Julie and Andrew Thoreen, formerly of Cedar Falls, isn’t about their separation as couple and band, but rather the subtly uncharted part where they consider coming back from it. The album moves between cautious optimism and doubt. Textures of horns, keyboards and bass guitar support close harmonies—at times recalling Stereolab’s *Dots and Loops*—as impressionistic, emotions-laid-bare illustrations of their mental wrestling draw you into their process of re-commitment. (Reviewed by Mike Roeder in *Little Village* issue #230)



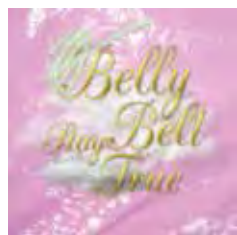
Cubits

Cubits

The debut self-titled album from the Fairfield synth-pop trio Cubits is an

entrancing, haunting listen that you’ll want to hide inside of for a few days—like the blanket fort where your imagination ran wild as a kid. If you like feeling a little alone and separate in a public place, this is your headphone companion for sure. The album showcases the versatility of multi-instrumentalists Michael Dugan, Parker DeMers and Nicholas Naioti who take turns trading vocals, synths, guitars and

drums in what is ultimately a hive-mind where no piece can be taken away from the whole. (Reviewed by Nate Logsdon in *Little Village* issue #220)



Belly Belt

Stay True

Iowa City West High alumna Kate Feldmann’s Belly Belt isn’t miles away from

her day job dressing as a Disney princess for children’s birthday parties. She adopts personas, she plays make-believe, she toys with identity as she did on her previous album, *Bangers*. Every sound, word and gesture is intentionally synthetic and artificial, but paradoxically sincere, toying with a sort of “joking/not joking” irony when it comes to the image of a female pop artist. With no fixed meaning, and the performance of emotion instead of its direct expression, *Stay True* is like a Miranda July movie—you feel that something important is happening even if you have no idea what’s going on. (Reviewed by Kent Williams in *Little Village* issue #218)



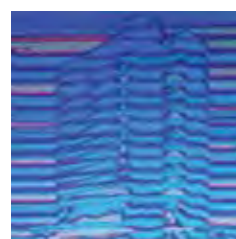
The Fuss

The Fuss

Des Moines-based rock band The Fuss make the kind of catchy pop rock

music that reminds one of Tommy Tutone or The Replacements. What distinguishes The Fuss are the sound of Joey Lyons’ voice—a faintly nasal, bright tenor with good intonation and surprising range—and the band’s clean, un-gimmicky sound. They make accessible, catchy music, but what gives it staying power is attention to detail. These songs have intricate, precise construction, like a Swiss watch, but the performances never feel tight. The old CD

slogan “Perfect Sound Forever” comes to mind: They aren’t perfect, but they’re close enough for rock and roll. (Reviewed by Kent Williams in *Little Village* issue #223)



MacMillan & Spengler

Demonstration

The four-song cassette *Demonstration* by Ian MacMillan

and Brendan Spengler does what the title implies: demonstrate the rhythmic and textural capacities of this particular configuration of Iowa City musicians, with tasty, sunshiny throwbacks to early ’70s krautrock and electronic music. As you glide into ephemeral bliss, then get dragged back down to the drone pound (now popularly understood as “The Upside Down” thanks to the dark synth soundtrack to *Stranger Things*), you’ll enjoy exploring the outer reaches of this duo’s abilities. (Reviewed by Liv Carrow in *Little Village* issue #218)



Elizabeth Moen

That’s All I Wanted

On her sophomore album, Elizabeth

Moen of Iowa City ditches the acoustic guitar for a full ensemble of electric guitars, bass and percussion (and one piano ballad), transfiguring folk into an experience in the totality of instruments. But her vocals never shy away from the driver’s seat. Deftly muffled guitar work by Moen (as well as guitarists Joel Anderson and Dana Telsrow) highlights the musical restraint of this record to give way to Moen’s howls and croons and hushes. The record’s all-star cast includes Blake Shaw, Justin LeDuc, Mike Schulte, William Elliott Whitmore and more. (Reviewed by Kent Williams in *Little Village* issue #220) ■

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My Mother as the Voice of Kahlo

BY ANALICIA SOTELO

I am fourteen & feeling ugly

looking at a unibrow
like the one I'd like to get rid of

when my mother says

Yes	it's supposed to be a bird
See	she did it on purpose
See	she didn't care

what people thought of her
only what they were made of
which animals were inside & why

Here she's a stag in mid-leap

with nine arrows in her body
alive bleeding

Her grief is constant & irreparable

Like the crown of fresh flowers
she killed herself each day

See the instinct for painting is the instinct for power

Women don't
choose work over love
but it's not the same for men

See all men are in love with themselves

Like Diego & your father

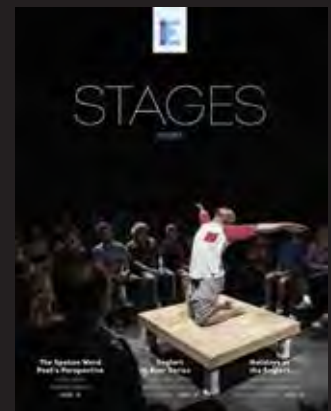
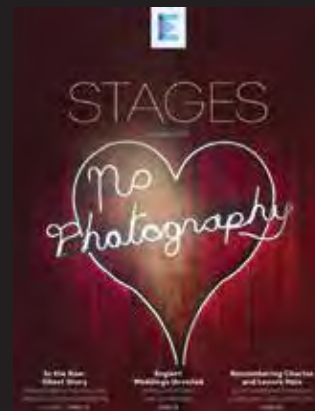
& even an artist
will leave his wife behind



Special thanks to Analicia Sotelo and The Iowa Review for allowing us this excerpt. Sotelo's piece can be found in issue 47.2. Visit iowareview.org or Prairie Lights Bookstore to get your copy today!

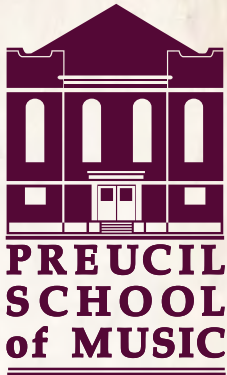
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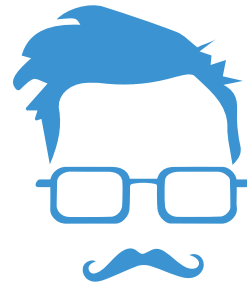


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Emergency exits are located throughout the theatre auditorium. Please identify the emergency exit closest to your seat and note that it may not be the door you entered through.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Our ushers are stationed at auditorium entrances. If you have any questions or concerns during your visit to The Englert Theatre please ask an usher. If they don't have the answer they will find the appropriate staff person to accommodate your needs.

STAY AWARE

Please remain aware of your surroundings and notify an usher or staff member if you notice anything that appears suspicious or out of place.

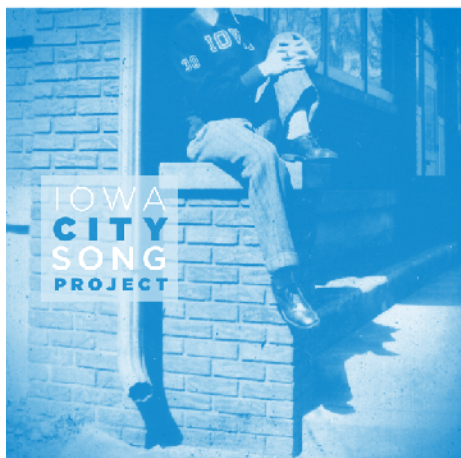
Above all, the use of common sense is key to the safety of everyone!

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

You will be directed to leave the building by the sounding alarm or by theatre personnel. When exiting, please proceed in an orderly and prompt fashion to a safe area away from the building. We request you convene at the pedestrian mall located west of the building. Theatre staff will announce updates on if and when it is safe to re-enter the building. ■

Englert Commissions

The amount of creativity contained within the Iowa City area is astounding. Musicians, artists, writers, photographers, and more are abundant within the Corridor, adding to the flavor of this Midwest oasis of art and culture. The Englert Theatre wanted to highlight this talent and began offering collaborative opportunities to local artists, commissioning projects to commemorate Englert milestones, our ever-supportive community, and the city we call home.

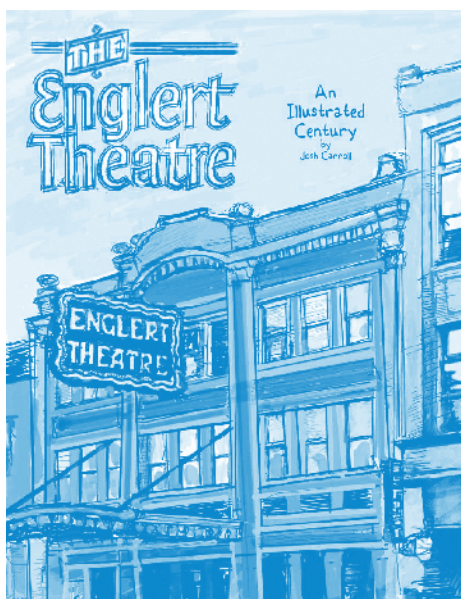


Iowa City Song Project

In celebration of its 100th birthday in 2012, The Englert Theatre commissioned 31 Iowan musicians and bands to write and record songs inspired by Iowa City. The result is the *Iowa City Song Project*, an album as diverse and cutting edge as the city itself. The album contains a spectrum of music from roots-rock to the avant-garde, bringing together a community of artists in a unique musical experience. Give it a listen at <https://soundcloud.com/englert>. CDs and LPs are available for purchase at the box office.

Englert at 100

Englert at 100 showcases Iowa City-based photographer Sandy Dyas' celebration of the Englert's centennial year. Her photos document Englert show days from bus arrivals to post-performance loadouts. Dyas was given full access behind the scenes, capturing performers warming up in the dressing rooms and Englert staff working their offstage magic, creating an artistic documentation of the theater's identity.



An Illustrated Century by Josh Carroll

Local artist Josh Carroll was commissioned to create a comic book documenting a century of Englert Theatre history including its 1912 Vaudeville origins, movie theatre heyday, and performing arts center reincarnation. This richly-illustrated timeline provides an engaging way to connect with the past and trace the journey of Iowa City's last remaining historic theater.

Poetry by Dora Malech

In 2014, the Englert celebrated its 10-year anniversary as a nonprofit. Celebrations included special performances, dinners, and commissioned work from poet and former Iowa City resident Dora Malech. The Englert commissioned Malech to write original poetry for the anniversary, celebrating the theme of gratitude. Without the efforts and continuing support of the community, the Englert wouldn't exist as it is today, and we are forever grateful to our donors, sponsors, patrons, and volunteers.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE 2014: Nat Baldwin

The Englert believes in supporting emerging and working artists and has created an Artist-in-Residence Program to allow artists time to work on their projects while experiencing and engaging with the Iowa Creative Corridor. Bassist/composer Nat Baldwin of the rock band Dirty Projectors was the first resident hosted in February 2014. Baldwin's residency included substantial time for him to work on new compositions as well as to engage with the Corridor community by conducting a songwriting workshop with students



CDS, LPS, ILLUSTRATED CENTURY BOOKS, AND PHOTOGRAPHY ARE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT THE BOX OFFICE AND AT SELECT SHOWS.

from Tate High School and visiting area cultural institutions with local artists.

Englert Beer Series

From Fall 2015 to Spring 2016, the Englert partnered with three local breweries to brew three original beers for the Englert Beer Series. Inspired by our past, present, and future, the original beers poured from the minds of brewers at Backpocket Brewing Company, Lion Bridge Brewing Company, and Big Grove Brewery. Backpocket's Riot of '84 Pre-Prohibition Lager was reminiscent of the beer likely made by John Englert at Iowa City's first brewery, and inspired by his hand in inciting the Beer Riots of 1884. Lion Bridge's Local Talent Robust Porter shines a spotlight on our mission of serving as a conduit between local and national scenes. Finally, Big Grove's Quantum Finish Hybrid-Style Double IPA is a funky beer aged in Cedar Ridge barrels with season citrus fruits, a true Corridor collaboration. Englert Beer Series beer may be available for purchase again in the future.

The Evolution of Bruno Littlemore

The Englert's first-ever, commissioned original stage play, *The Evolution of Bruno Littlemore*, premiered in Spring 2016. It's a story of evolution, biological and lingual. It's a story of love, across boundaries and species. It's a story of oppression, of inequality and colonialism. It's the story of Bruno Littlemore, an unusually intelligent chimpanzee. Presented in partnership with Working Group Theatre and New Territory Dance Company, the piece is based on the novel from recent Iowa Writers' Workshop graduate Benjamin Hale.

ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE 2016/2017: *Dis/Unity: A Service*

The Englert's Artist-in-Residence program hosted a group of artists for a week in Summer 2016 to workshop an in-the-making performance-based installation, *Dis/Unity: A Service*, which premiered before a live audience at the Deadwood Tavern, addressing trauma, liberation, and transcendence through sculptural installations and audience interaction. The final work premiered at the Englert in Fall 2017, and featured an ensemble of artists: Barber, Boubacar Djiga, Courtney D. Jones, Esther Baker-Tarpage, Heidi Wiren Bartlett, Raquel Monroe, and Wendell Gray II. ■



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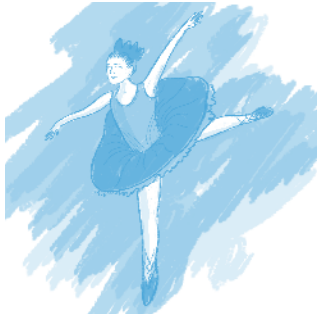


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Upcoming Events



THE NUTCRACKER

December 1 - 5
\$20 - \$32 Reserved
Seating

Nolte Academy & the Englert Theatre are proud to present a unique and highly entertaining version of the beloved Christmas classic, *The Nutcracker*. No holiday is complete without a visit to Clara's house where her beloved Uncle Drosselmeyer presents the magical gift of the *Nutcracker*. This holiday classic comes to life with performances by dancers from Nolte Academy and a live orchestra consisting of local musicians conducted by Carey Bostian. Sponsored by Hills Bank & Trust Company.



JIM NORTON

December 9 at 8 p.m.
\$33.50 - \$83.50 Reserved
Seating

American stand-up comedian, radio personality, bestselling

author and actor, Jim Norton is the co-host of "The Jim Norton & Sam Roberts Show" that can be heard every morning on SiriusXM Satellite Radio. His latest stand up special, "Mouthful of Shame" is streaming now on Netflix where Jim lays out a full serving of refreshingly unapologetic humor in his first Netflix comedy special. In May 2016, he was announced as co-host of the podcast *UFC's Unfiltered with Jim Norton & Matt Serra*. Since 2014 he has been a contributor to *Time Magazine*. He has an additional four one-hour comedy specials that can be seen on Hulu, Amazon, and HBO GO.

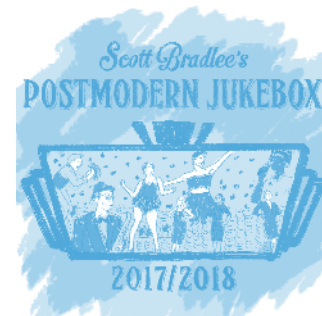


SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS

January 14 at 7 p.m.
\$35 Reserved Seating

2016 marked the 20th anniversary of the Squirrel Nut Zippers' most celebrated and commercially successful album, *Hot*. Rocketing to commercial success during the swing revival of the late '90s, *Hot* sold more than 1.3 million copies and featured their most successful single, "Hell." "It's not a reunion, it's a revival," band leader Jimbo Mathus said. "The band includes cutting-edge

talent from New Orleans and the songs have been brought to life in an exciting new way." Plans are underway for the band to record a brand new album, which would be their first new studio album in 17 years.



SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX

February 11 at 7 p.m.
\$46.50 - \$146.50 Reserved
Seating

Since Bradlee created PMJ in 2009, the project has amassed more than 740 million YouTube views and 2.7 million subscribers, chalked up more than 1 million likes on Facebook, performed on *Good Morning America*, topped iTunes charts with all 14 of their releases since 2014, caught the attention of NPR Music and NBC News, and played hundreds of shows to sold-out houses around the world. "Saucy, sassy, stylish, and a with steady slew of some of the biggest pop songs in recent memory, a night out with Scott Bradlee and his cadre of musical powerhouses spells just one thing—a guaranteed party," writes MTV News.



TOMMY EMMANUEL

February 13 at 7:30 p.m.
\$44.50 Reserved Seating

The Englert is proud to announce that guitar virtuoso Tommy Emmanuel will return to the Englert in a live performance co-presented with Frank Productions, featuring supporting act Rodney Crowell. "With six strings, 10 fingers, and a whole lot of tricks, Emmanuel directs an orchestra of sound—one man exploring the bounds of what a single instrument can do," writes the *Post-Standard*.



VALERIE JUNE

February 19 at 8 p.m.
\$26.50 Reserved Seating

With her breakout album *Pushin' Against A Stone*, singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Valerie June went from self-releasing her

music as Tennessee's best kept secret to being hailed by the *New York Times* as one of America's "most intriguing, fully formed new talents." *The New Yorker* was captivated by her "unique, stunning voice," while *Rolling Stone* dubbed her "unstoppable." Her 2017 follow-up, *The Order of Time*, was released to critical acclaim. "Rambling yet precise, regal yet downhome, earthy yet mystical, June's musical imagination is a world to get lost in," writes NPR.



ZOSO

February 24 at 8 p.m.
\$28 General Admission

The Empire Agency presents Zoso, the Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience, performing the most accurate and captivating Led Zeppelin live show since 1995. For Zoso, it's much more than just being a tribute, it's about touching a golden era in music. Zoso embodies Page, Plant, Bonham and Jones in their spirit, tightly wound talent and authenticity. Each band member has been

carefully selected to portray both the appearance and playing styles of their Led Zeppelin counterparts. As one of the longest-tenured Zeppelin tributes, Zoso's 2,400 live shows around the world, including a slot at Bonnaroo in 2003, have established them as the most traveled and successful band in the market.



GAELIC STORM

March 3 at 8 p.m.
\$36.50 Reserved Seating

The Englert is excited to announce that Celtic juggernauts Gaelic Storm will return to their stage live on Saturday, March 3 at 8 p.m., sponsored by Micky's Irish Pub & Grill. The band attributes their continued success to their fanatic audience, and it's a well-diversified crowd for sure. Country-music folks adore the storytelling, bluegrass-heads love the instrumentals, Celtic fans love their devotion to tradition, and rockers simply relish the passion with which they play their instruments.

Ticket purchases may incur additional fees. For more information, please go to: englert.org/about/understanding-ticket-fees

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The face of the Englert circa 1912

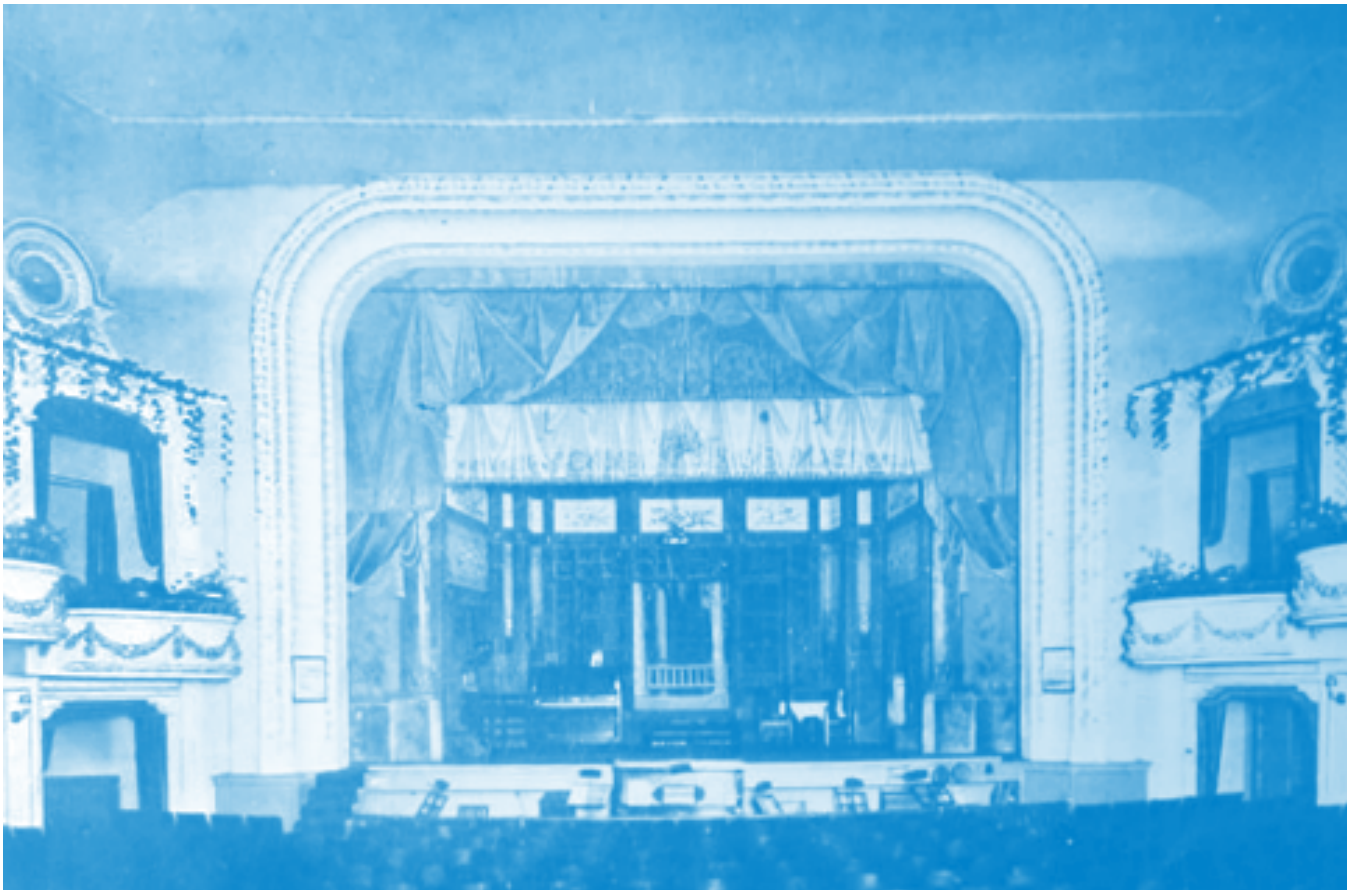
The History of the Englert

THE ENGLERT THEATRE first opened its doors on September 26, 1912. William Englert and his wife Etta built the theater to rival the finest stages and movie houses throughout the Midwest. Replacing a livery stable that originally stood in the location, the Englert brought Vaudeville touring acts to Iowa City, where townspeople and students filled its 1,071 seats. In addition to live stage acts, the Englert also boasted high quality projection equipment for showing three-reel films.

Two storefronts were originally housed in the building: a barbershop where the elevator is now and a candy store in the area that is now the box office. The Englert family lived on the second floor of the theater building and provided rooms for the performers on the third floor. In 1920, William Englert died of a cerebral hemorrhage in his bedroom, now the Englert offices, at only 46 years old. Following William's death, Etta enlisted A.H. Blank (Central States of Des Moines) and his partner Nate Chapman to oversee operation of the Englert, but Nate died in 1925, leaving his wife Dora with two small children, Ansel, age 10 (destined to be a local District Court Judge and later involved in the Englert's management) and Marvin, age four. Dora retained a partnership with Blank, and her brother, Al Davis, became manager of the Englert, a position he held until he retired. A woman ahead of her time, Dora was always involved in the operation of the theater.

In later days, Dora's great-grandchildren Nathan, Katherine, and Barbara Chapman would hear Dora tell the story of witnessing the massive February 13, 1926 fire that nearly destroyed the Englert. Historical accounts place both Dora and Etta at the scene, watching in horror and barking instructions at firemen as the blaze tore through the roof. The fire caused \$125,000 of damage to a building that cost \$60,000 to build in 1912. Etta Englert and her new husband, James Hanlon, in cooperation with A.H. Blank and Dora Chapman, immediately worked to rebuild the Englert, tapping into the prevailing tastes of the 1920s. During this era, large and ornate movie palaces were being built in cities across the United States, and Iowa City would not be surpassed.

The new Englert operated for decades as a joint venture. Etta Englert Hanlon and her second husband continued to reside in the building,



while Dora Chapman and Al Davis managed the theater in conjunction with A. H. Blank. Years later, Blank and Central States of Des Moines, in partnership with the Chapman family, operated the theater and supervised its division into two small-screen theater spaces in the 1980s.

By 1999, the managers of the Englert finally decided to close the theater and sell the aging building. It was purchased by a bar owner who had plans to turn it into a nightclub. Not wanting to see the theater disappear, a group of concerned citizens persuaded the City of Iowa City to purchase the theater and hold it in trust until funds could be raised.

For the next five years, this group of citizens mobilized to purchase the theater from the City of Iowa City and rebuild the Englert as a community cultural center. They began the

“Save the Englert” campaign to raise the funds necessary to renovate the theater to its former grandeur.

Hundreds of local businesses and individuals contributed countless hours and millions of dollars to bring the theater back to life. Their contributions are forever recognized on the large Capital Campaign plaque in the Englert lobby, on the nameplates on the seats of the theater, and on numerous plaques around the building.

Finally, on December 3, 2004, a community’s dream became a reality when The Englert Theatre reopened for its first live performance in more than 60 years. Today, The Englert Theatre stands as a testament to all who believed in its recreation. ■

Audience Guidelines

In the age of lightning-fast entertainment that allows movies, music, and more to be downloaded in an instant to a smartphone, consumers may not be aware of how their technology and behavior can affect the concert-going experience for fellow audience members and for the performers themselves. The following guidelines need to be respected in order for all patrons and artists to have an enjoyable and safe experience. Please be courteous to those around you.

If you need assistance during the show, please go to your nearest volunteer usher. If additional assistance is needed, the usher will find the appropriate person to help you further.

Please arrive on time. We know parking downtown can be a hassle and our wait-call lines can be long. Please allow extra time for travel, parking, and finding your seats. If you arrive late, we may ask you to wait until an appropriate break in the show to get you to your seats.

Do not have conversations, even whispering, during the concert or event. This will distract performers as well as fellow audience members. If your child becomes restless, frightened, or loud, please take him or her to the lobby.

Silence all cell phones, pagers, watches, and other devices. Don't text, tweet, blog, or surf the web. The glow from your device is distracting. You are here to enjoy the show, so please give the show your attention!

Keep feet, bags, and children out of the aisles. Blocking the aisles is against the fire code.

Pay attention to venue rules and posted notices. Many shows do not allow photography or recording. Flash photography is never allowed. If we ask you to stop, please do so.

Pay attention to the vibe of the show. If the crowd gets up and starts dancing, join them. Please don't try to do a one-person show for your own entertainment. We will ask you to sit down.

Respect the supporting act: You never know where they are going in the future. If you really dislike the music, take a walk or check out our current gallery exhibit on the second floor. Please be polite.

Patrons are never allowed on stage. Not before the show, during the show, or after the show.

Grounds for removal: If our staff finds you are not adhering to the above guidelines, we will give one verbal warning requesting that you change your behavior. If you continue to disregard the guidelines, we will request that you leave the premises. Being removed from more than one event will result in being banned from Englert-presented events for at least one calendar year. ■

Index

AW WELT AMBRISCO INSURANCE, INC	9	M.C. GINSBERG	2, 59, 60
BEADOLOGY	9	MIDWESTIX	48
BEST CASE WINES	11	MOLLY'S CUPCAKES	48
BLANK & MCCUNE A-TEAM	26	NEW PIONEER FOOD CO-OP	18
BLANK & MCCUNE NOLAN PETERSEN	37	OLD CREAMERY THEATRE	40
BREAD GARDEN MARKET	22-23	RIVER CITY DENTAL CARE	14
CITY REVEALED	10	RIVERSIDE THEATRE	37
CORALVILLE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS	37	ORCHESTRA IOWA	28
DESIGN RANCH	44	PHOEBE MARTIN, REALTOR	52
DELUXE CAKES & PASTRIES	42	PREUCIL SCHOOL OF MUSIC	32
DISCERNING EYE	42	SIMMONS PERRINE MOYER BERGMAN PLC	48
FILMSCENE	38	TAXES PLUS	32
GOODFELLOW PRINTING, INC.	40	THEATRE CEDAR RAPIDS	33
HANDS	15	TOYOTA OF IOWA CITY	53
HILLS BANK AND TRUST COMPANY	37	URBAN ACRES	14
IOWA CITY DERMATOLOGY	44	WEST MUSIC	32
THE IOWA REVIEW	48	WESTWINDS REAL ESTATE	44
KCCJ JAZZ 88.3	7	THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION	49
KRUI 89.7 FM	38	THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA MUSEUM OF ART	48
LITTLE VILLAGE	17, 33		
MAGGIE'S FARM	13		

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