

THE

LIEDER

Winter 2025

Happy Holidays!

from all of us at the Lied Center!



Bill Stephan, CVE
Executive Director &
Chief Artistic Officer



As we prepare to turn the page on another spectacular year at the Lied, I want to offer you my personal gratitude for your continued support of the arts in Nebraska. You make it possible for the hope, inspiration, and connection offered by the arts to reach more people than ever before, both right here in Lincoln and in communities across the state.

Before we look forward to the new year, we get to celebrate a truly thrilling lineup of holiday programming! I especially hope I get to see you at the Broadway musical *A Christmas Story*, featuring all the nostalgia of the movie brought to the stage by the writers of *The Greatest Showman*, *La La Land*, and *Dear Evan Hansen*. With 8 performances between Dec. 16-21, this is the perfect show to guarantee some merry and bright amid all the hustle and bustle. We also have all the Christmas music you could ever want, performed by two of our all-time favorite ensembles — Canadian Brass and Mannheim Steamroller! Kick off December with holiday favorites from Canadian Brass on Dec. 5, and then cruise into Christmas with Mannheim Steamroller on Dec. 23 (two performances!).

Of course, we're also looking forward to more unforgettable events in the new year, including *Hadestown* in January, the Boston Pops playing the iconic music of *Star Wars* in February, the world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra in March, and dozens of other events that will entertain and inspire. Of course, I'm of the opinion that tickets to events make the absolute best Christmas presents! As you wrap up your holiday shopping, I hope you'll consider sharing the gift of unforgettable experiences and time spent together with the people you love.

There's so much to look forward to in 2026 at the Lied, and I'm so glad you'll be here for all of the excitement. I wish you all the warmth and joy of the season, and can't wait to see you soon at the Lied!



Deb Nelson
President | Friends of Lied
Board of Directors

As we move into the holiday season, I hope you have the opportunity to make seeing a holiday show at the Lied Center a part of your traditions. Watching a live performance can fill your cup with some of the same awe and wonder as when we were younger!

One of the many programs the Friends of Lied supports is Arts Across Nebraska. AAN connects the Lied Center with communities across the state. In each community, there are public performances, student matinees and educational outreach. I had the pleasure of attending the public performance by Omaha Street Percussion in Alliance. It was pure joy to watch the kids in the audience dance, conga, and then beg for more. Such an event can be transformative to a young person living far outside of Lincoln. Your support as a Friends of Lied member makes this possible. Two more AAN events are scheduled in March and April in Fremont, Auburn, Falls City, Everett, Norfolk, and Nebraska City.

Friends of Lied members know the importance of supporting the Lied Center and the performing arts. Your membership is so valuable to us. We are in our last few weeks of fundraising for the year. Please consider supporting the Lied Center by gifting tickets to performances, increasing your FOL level for added benefits or joining us on the FOL board. We are accepting new applications through January.

Wishing you Peace, Love and Joy.



@friendsoflied



@unfriendsoflied



@Friendsoflied

ON THE COVER: *A Christmas Story* is coming to the Lied Dec. 16-21. Purchase tickets online at liedcenter.org/event/christmas-story
You have EIGHT chances to see *A Christmas Story* with your family this holiday season at the Lied. Don't miss it!

WYNTON MARSALIS PRE-PERFORMANCE DINNER

The Friends of Lied board hosted a pre-performance dinner before Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis on Nov. 2. These fun themed meals are held for the public as a convenient way to do "dinner and a show," for just \$40 per person. Attendees enjoyed a performance by UNL students Brian Canonigo and Jonathan Leach, along with a fabulous fall buffet and cash bar at the Talon Room, just across the street from the Lied Center.

DISTINGUISHED ARTIST EVENT FEATURES JAY JOHNSON

The Lied Center's Distinguished Artist Event was held Tuesday, Nov. 4, beginning with a wide variety of appetizers and cocktails in the Lied Commons catered by The Venue, followed by a performance in the Johnny Carson Theater. Guests included members at the Distinguished and Patron Friend levels and the Circles of Giving.

The featured artist, Jay Johnson, acclaimed ventriloquist and actor best known for his role on the sitcom *Soap*, entertained the audience with his sharp humor and remarkable ventriloquism. Johnson, who made seven appearances on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, was joined on stage by his popular sidekicks, Bob and Darwin the monkey, who quickly won over the crowd. Monkey-themed table decorations added a whimsical touch to the evening.

The Lied Center extends sincere thanks to all donors in attendance for their continued support. Appreciation is also given to Amy Ossian, Lied Associate Director of Development and Membership; Linda Dickeson, Friends of Lied Board/Committee Chair; and board members Cindy Claussen, Susan Klanecky, Terri Pattavina, and Sue Moore for their leadership and contributions to this successful event.

STAFF FEATURE

Ben Cuca joined the Lied Center staff in July 2025 and has quickly become an integral part of the team! Ben obtained a BA in English Literature from Trinity College and then spent several years working in digital marketing, client relationships, and communications. He later returned to higher education to earn his MA in Communications from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Throughout high school, Ben was actively involved in theatre and participated in multiple choirs and a cappella groups, deepening his love for the performing arts. Ben is excited to be part of the Lied Center and to help create opportunities for others to engage in the arts and discover a lifelong passion like he did.



Ben Cuca, Development Coordinator

WELCOME NEW FRIENDS OF LIED MEMBERS!

Wendi & Mark Anderson

David E. Crawford

Rubab Husain

Rev. Ryan Lewis

Dee & Mike Austin

Benjamin Cuca

Daniel Jensen

Robert & Heather Miller

Brandon Bosch

Marcia A. Dorn

Clinton Leach

Michael O. Miller

Steve & Rhonda Burbach

Brandon Henley

Cindy & Tim LeGrande

Steve & Sharon Placke

These new members joined between Sept. 8 and Nov. 6, 2025

It's a Major Award! Celebrate the Holidays with

You know that the Broadway musical version of the beloved movie *A Christmas Story* is coming to the Lied Center, but did you know:

- It was written by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, the team who wrote the music for the Tony Award-winning musical *Dear Evan Hansen*, the Academy Award-winning film *La La Land*, and *The Greatest Showman*?
- It opened on Broadway in 2012 and was nominated for three Tony Awards – Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, and Best Original Score?
- The show includes all the best-loved moments from the movie, Including the infamous “triple dog dare” that leaves Flick in a frozen predicament, poor Ralphie’s “pink nightmare” present from Aunt Clara, the maniacal department store Santa, Randy’s monster snowsuit, and of course, the Old Man’s fra-gee-lay major award! This is a musical, of course, so the famous leg lamp becomes a full production number with dancing leg lamps. Who would have it any other way?



Look Forward to FUN in the New Year!

Why not give yourself something FUN to look forward to as you kick off the new year? In the coldest, darkest days of January and February, uplifting, unexpected shows can be the cure for the winter blues. Here are a few of our recommendations!

Gabriela Montero, Piano

Jan. 26, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

This is not your usual piano concert! In her return to the Lied Center, celebrated pianist Gabriela Montero will perform a score for a screening of Charlie Chaplin's film *The Immigrant* that she will improvise right on the spot. Her visionary interpretations and unique compositional gifts have garnered her critical acclaim and a devoted following on the world stage, but it's her exceptional ability to improvise that makes her concerts truly unique.



Cirque Kalabante

Feb. 5, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

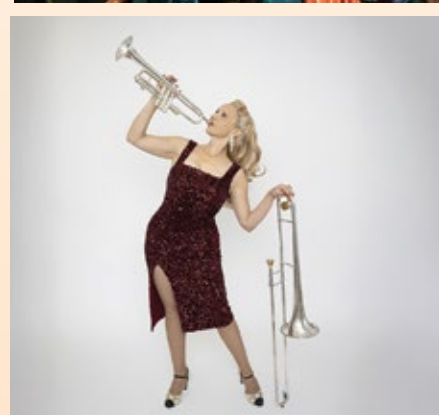
Get ready for gravity-defying moves and human pyramids, accompanied by the contemporary sounds of live Afro-Jazz, percussion, and kora! Cirque Kalabante's unforgettable Afrique en Cirque celebrates the beauty and artistry of African culture in a vibrant spectacle of colorful rhythms, innovative choreography, and jaw-dropping acrobatics. Prepare for an unforgettable journey!



Gunhild Carling

Feb. 20, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

Have you ever seen a musician play three trumpets at once? How about play a trumpet with no hands at all, while balancing it on her face? Or what about a performer who is a master of trombone, bagpipes, recorder, banjo, ukulele, harp, and more... can sing and tap dance... and sometimes does all of those things in the space of a single song? Known as “the wonder woman of jazz,” the charming and hilarious Swedish multi-instrumentalist Gunhild Carling is truly a musical experience to behold. She does it all with vintage swing, and it's no wonder that Postmodern Jukebox has featured her talents in several videos that have gone massively viral, including a singing/tap dancing/ten-instrument jazz cover of Pharrell's “Happy.”



Keeping the Arts Alive & Growing

It has been the best of times at the Lied with *Frozen*, *Tina*, *Hamlet*, Carson-100, Wynton Marsalis, Yo-Yo Ma and the biggest holiday line up in years. While the smiles are on stage and in our hearts from these programs, the Lied is operating in the climate of major university budget reductions, reduced support from the National Endowment for the Arts and ticket sales that have often not met expectations due to inflation among other factors. We hope you will consider making a special contribution to the Lied during this holiday season to help keep the arts alive and thriving on stage and in classrooms. If you have already made a gift to the Friends this year, would you consider an additional gift or increasing your membership level when it is time to renew? It is an exciting time at the Lied Center and in Nebraska with programs on stage that give us hope, joy, laughter and beauty. Your support today makes exceptional performances and outreach possible tomorrow.

There are many ways to give. Choose the one that works best for you:

- Write a check to Friends of Lied and mail it before the end of the calendar year.
- Use a credit card online at liedcenter.org/friends and earn extra points or miles!
- Donate through your IRA by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution and receive excellent tax benefits!
- Donate from your Donor Advised Fund. Don't have a Donor Advised Fund? Now is a great time to create one.

Thanks for all you do to keep the arts alive & growing in Nebraska!

The Friends of Lied is an exempt organization as described in Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; EIN #47-0727188.

The Friends of Lied gala has nearly sold out for the third year in a row!

To snag the few remaining tickets or register to bid on the silent auction items from the comfort of your home, visit liedcenter.org/gala. Set your high bid and you could win something special while supporting Friends of Lied!

- **An overnight stay to watch the incredible Sandhill Cranes at The Crane Trust**
- **VIP tickets to *American Idol* and *America's Got Talent***
- **Husker Volleyball Tickets**
- **Bison Basketball System**
- **A De'Longhi Magnifica Evo Espresso & Coffee Machine**
- **Dozens of gift cards to fabulous restaurants, spa packages, golfing, sports tickets and more!**

FRIENDS OF LIED PRESENTS

Lied Royale

A Night Under the Palms

JAN 31, 2026

Contact us at lieddevelopment@unl.edu with questions about the gala or to inquire about serving on the Friends of Lied board of directors.

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Drumroll, please!

Omaha Street Percussion opens Arts Across Nebraska season with a bang

Our first Arts Across Nebraska tour of the 2025-26 season, Omaha Street Percussion, toured western Nebraska in September visiting Alliance, Scottsbluff, and McCook. Omaha Street Percussion delivers high-energy, heart-pounding entertainment using everyday items like buckets, paint cans, garbage can lids, and bar stools to create unforgettable rhythm and sound. What began as a group of friends raising money for someone in need has grown into a crowd-pleasing sensation. From festivals and school assemblies to performances with the Omaha Storm Chasers, the Cornhusker Marching Band, and even an audition for *America's Got Talent*, this dynamic group is making serious noise, captivating audiences, and creating excitement everywhere they go.

Omaha Street Percussion served a wide range of students and community members, including working with the preschoolers at Alliance Early Childhood Education and performing a matinee and public evening performance at the Alliance High School Performing Arts Center, a percussion workshop with Gering Middle School students and two matinee performances at the Midwest Theater in Scottsbluff, and a workshop with the YMCA Bison Kids Club after-school program in McCook, with a matinee and public evening performance at the Fox Theatre. **2,380 Nebraskans** were served by the Omaha Street Percussion tour, and the group traveled 948 miles.

Surveys indicated that 100% of respondents enjoyed the performance, with many noting that they enjoyed the high energy, engaging nature of the performance. Folks were particularly impressed by the group's ability to create excitement among the young audience members, including a conga line that wrapped around the auditorium. One audience member offered, "Thanks for coming to McCook. It's awesome to bring these special shows to rural Nebraska. We appreciate it!" with another adding "This was one of the best. Keep them coming to western Nebraska."

We are also grateful to Education Chair Kat Ousey for coordinating and Friends of Lied members Deb Nelson, Gary Tharnish, and Kim Hinrichs for hosting membership tables and broadening our impact with patrons in our partner communities this tour. It makes the program extra meaningful when members can attend, connect with local communities, and participate in Arts Across Nebraska firsthand! We also want to thank our Arts Across Nebraska sponsors Friends of Lied, The Richard P. Kimmel and Laurine Kimmel Charitable Foundation, and the Nebraska Arts Council & Nebraska Cultural Endowment for their support.

Our next Arts Across Nebraska Tour, the rescheduled 123 Andrés, will take place March 31-April 2, 2026, visiting Norfolk, Nebraska City, and Kearney, followed by Animal Engine Theatre Company's world premiere tour of the Lied Center commissioned play *Capital City* in mid-April 2026. Please visit our website for the most up-to-date information, www.liedcenter.org/education/arts-across-nebraska



Soweto Gospel Choir Brings Joy, Healing, & Community to Lincoln

The internationally acclaimed Soweto Gospel Choir filled Lincoln with music, movement, and powerful moments of connection Nov. 11-13. Their multi-day residency showcased the transformative impact of the arts across campus, youth programs, and the broader community. In total, this residency served **478 members of the Lincoln community**.

The choir began their residency at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where they were featured guests at Dish It Up, hosted by the Office of Academic Success and Intercultural Services. Students, faculty, and staff gathered for a vibrant Q&A session, hearing firsthand about the choir's musical traditions, their cultural roots, and the global impact of South African choral and gospel music. The event set the tone for the week: an open exchange of stories, questions, and shared humanity.

On Nov. 12, the choir visited the Lancaster County Youth Services Center, partnering with the Pathfinders program of Lincoln Public Schools. Working with four different groups of incarcerated youth ages 12-18, the artists led musical demonstrations, rhythm activities, and a spirited Q&A. The room shifted quickly from curiosity to joy as the young people clapped, danced, and sang alongside the choir. For many participants, this was a rare moment of creative expression and connection – a reminder of how the arts can offer healing and hope even in difficult circumstances.

Later that day, the choir traveled to the Malone Center, where 25 children ages 5-13 eagerly awaited them. The choir energized the space with demonstrations of South African vocal traditions and led the students through dance games and

call-and-response songs. The young participants leapt in with enthusiasm, filling the room with laughter and movement. For many, this was their first experience with South African musical traditions, and the artists' warmth made it instantly accessible.

The day concluded with a powerful community sing at First Plymouth Church, hosted in partnership with Abendmusik and featuring members of the Lincoln Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. A total of 72 local singers came together to learn traditional South African repertoire taught directly by Soweto Gospel Choir members. The evening offered a rare opportunity for singers of all backgrounds to join voices with Grammy-winning artists, celebrating community through shared song.

The choir returned to campus on Nov. 13 to visit UNL Music Convocation, where they performed a brief demonstration and engaged students in discussion. A highlight of the week came when 18 UNL choir students rehearsed the finale piece with Soweto Gospel Choir while their peers observed. Through direct artistic collaboration - blending vocal traditions and musical styles - students experienced firsthand the artistry, discipline, and joy that define the choir's work.

The residency culminated that evening, when the 18 UNL student singers joined Soweto Gospel Choir onstage for the finale of their Lied Center performance. This moment not only honors the students' hard work but also symbolizes the purpose of the residency: to build bridges between cultures, generations, and communities through shared artistic expression.



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of



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