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A NC Black Rep Experience

JUL 27 — WINSTON-SALEM, NC — AUG 1

2026

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Friday, July 31, 2:00pm
Friday, July 31, 8:00pm
Saturday, August 1, 2:00pm
Saturday, August 1, 8:00pm

Salem College
Shirley Recital Hall

PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA • HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD ANATOMY OF AN OPERA: NIA IMANI FRANKLIN • STEAL AWAY HOME OUR STORIES...WE ARE, BECAUSE WE WERE • REIMAGINED VOLUME III: YOUNG THANG • PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON • RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE • SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL • MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE • NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM • MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY • JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD • ANATOMY OF AN OPERA: NIA IMANI FRANKLIN • STEAL AWAY HOME • OUR STORIES...WE ARE, BECAUSE WE WERE • REIMAGINED VOLUME III: YOUNG THANG PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA • HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES

INTERNATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL®

A NC Black Rep Experience

Winston-Salem | The City of Winston-Salem salutes the 2026 International Black Theatre Festival.

CROSS THAT RIVER

Love Productions Records

Music by Allan Harris
Book by ALLAN & PAT HARRIS

TECH CREW

Director ..... WILLIAM SOLEAU
Technical Direction ..... WILLIAM SOLEAU & PATRICIA HARRIS
Costume Design ..... SHIRLEY IZDAKOVICH
Light Design ..... WILLIAM SOLEAU
Projection Designer ..... JOEY MORO
Sound Design ..... SANTIAGO LEON
Producer ..... PAT HARRIS

CAST

Blue ..... ALLAN HARRIS
Young Blue ..... JEFFERY LEWIS
Mama Lila, Annie, Dark Spanish Lady, Lila,
Saloon Hall Girl ..... MAYA AZUCENA
Courtney, Saloon Hall Girl, Daphne ..... ELIZAH KNIGHT

MUSICIANS

John Di Martino ..... Piano and Keyboard
Russell Markey ..... Drums, Percussion & Vocals
Nimrod Speaks ..... Bass
Alan Grubner ..... Violin & Vocals

SCENES
PLACE

Scene 1 ..... On The Plantation
Scene 2 ..... Into the West
Scene 3 ..... The Reckoning

WHO'S WHO

Allan Harris (Role Blue)
Allan Harris is a New York–based jazz vocalist, guitarist, composer, actor, and storyteller whose sound blends jazz, blues, soul, and spoken word into something deeply rooted in tradition and driven by story. Raised in Brooklyn and shaped by Harlem's creative pulse, he has spent more than three decades performing on stages around the world, releasing 17 recordings and earning recognition from *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The London Times, JazzTimes, and DownBeat,* which named him a "Rising Star Jazz Vocalist." Harris is the recipient of the New York Nightlife Award for Outstanding Jazz Vocalist and is a winner of the Sarah Vaughan International Vocal Competition. Tony Bennett called him "my favorite vocalist," while Michael Feinstein dubbed him "the heir to Nat King Cole." Inspired by voices like Cole, Johnny Hartman, and Joe Williams, along with the poetry of Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, and Shakespeare, Harris brings a natural sense of storytelling to everything he creates, from his celebrated *The Poetry of Jazz* project to his original theatrical production *Cross That River*. Written by Harris, *Cross That River* is a groundbreaking musical journey exploring the untold history of Black cowboys in the American West following the Civil War. Combining original music, jazz, folk, blues, gospel, and rock, the production enjoyed an extended Off Broadway run, received 7 Audelco Award nominations for excellence in Black theater, and has toured nationally, bringing this overlooked chapter of American history to audiences across the country. Harris continues to use music and storytelling as a bridge between cultures, generations, and histories.

Jeffery Lewis (Young Blue)
"You make the hairs on my head rise." – Oprah Winfrey

Jeffery Lewis is a singer and actor from Atlanta, Georgia whose soulful voice and commanding stage presence have earned national and international acclaim. Born in Americus, Georgia, Lewis first

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gained attention as one half of the viral YouTube sensation The Craig Lewis Band. His remarkable talent soon caught the attention of award-winning filmmaker, producer, and actor Tyler Perry, who famously said, "I found this kid on YouTube and he is amazing."

That discovery led to a close creative relationship with Perry and appearances in five nationally successful stage productions, including A Madea's Big Happy Family and A Madea Christmas. Perry also introduced Lewis to a national television audience on The Oprah Winfrey Show. During an impromptu performance with his bandmate, Oprah enthusiastically responded, "These guys are such unbelievable singers."

Lewis later reached an even broader audience on America's Got Talent, where his performances earned praise from judge Howard Stern, who remarked, "You took a very difficult song and you owned it." Lewis and his bandmate went on to become finalists on the hit series.

Continuing to build a career that spans music, theater, television, and film, Lewis has appeared in numerous productions while releasing an array of songs and videos. Inspired by legendary vocalists such as Whitney Houston, Lewis recalls being deeply moved by her artistry. In a full-circle moment, Houston herself praised his voice after hearing him sing in the studio.

Today, Lewis stars as Malcolm on the television series Ma's House, while continuing to expand his work as both a vocalist and actor. With extraordinary range, emotional depth, and natural charisma, Jeffery Lewis stands out as a rare and compelling talent whose artistic journey continues to evolve.

Maya Azucena (Mama Lila, Dark Spanish Lady, Annie, Lila)
Maya Azucena is a multi-award-winning recording artist, songwriter, and global humanitarian known for creating music that uplifts,

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inspires, and empowers. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Maya has built an international career blending Soul, Rock, Pop, and Jazz influences with socially conscious storytelling and electrifying vocal artistry. Possessing a remarkable four-octave range, she has become recognized worldwide for performances that combine emotional depth, musical excellence, and an unwavering commitment to positive change.

Maya earned a Grammy Certificate for her featured performance alongside Stephen Marley on the Grammy Award-winning album *Mind Control*, which received the Grammy for Best Reggae Album. She also appeared as a mentor and vocal coach on MTV's *Made*, helping guide young artists through personal transformation and creative growth.

A passionate advocate for women's rights and social justice, Maya played an active role in *One Billion Rising*, the international movement founded by Eve Ensler to end domestic violence. Her critically acclaimed anthem "Dance Revolution" was commissioned to inspire global participation in the campaign and became a powerful soundtrack for activism and empowerment.
Through invitations from international festivals, cultural organizations, and U.S. Embassies, Maya has toured extensively throughout Europe, China, India, Burma, South Africa, Tanzania, Haiti, Honduras, Croatia, and Russia, among many other countries. Her work has been featured in publications including *The Washington Post*, *Billboard*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*.

Elizah Knight (Courtney, Constance, Daphne, Saloon Hall Singer, Ensemble singing)

My name is Elizah Knight. I am an actor, singer, dancer, and budding writer. I recently graduated from Ithaca College with my BFA in Musical Theater and a minor in Writing. Recently I have had the opportunity to perform in new works including Iva Brdars And What

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Happens If I Don't and classical pieces such as House of Desires where I played aristocrat Doña Ana. I am deeply grateful for my education and seek to be a lifelong learner. I recently finished writing my first novella, Object Permanence and am working on a debut novel. You can always check my instagram @elizahknight. I am excited to be taking the next steps in my career and joining the cast of Cross That River as I settle in New York City and am currently signed with About Artists Agency!

Rick Germanson - Piano
RICK GERMANSON has been a highly in-demand pianist on the New York City Jazz scene for well over a decade. A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Rick relocated to New York City in 1998. Rick won the GRAND PRIZE at The American Pianists' Association Jazz Piano Competition in 1996. He was awarded "Best of New Talent" in 2004 by All About Jazz NYC. Since 2001 to the present, Rick has been touring and recording with The Cannonball Legacy Band featuring Louis Hayes. From 2003-2008 Rick also toured with master guitarist Pat Martino. Rick was pianist with Russell Malone for over a decade and is on his last three recordings. For the past decade Rick has served as Professor of Jazz Piano at The Jackie McLean Institute at The Hartt School of Music, University of Hartford. Rick was also on faculty at NJPAC Jazz For Teens Program for one year before that. Rick has also taught and presented clinics at NY University; The Juilliard School; Oberlin College; and the University of Florida.

Jay White - Bass
Jay White is a multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, songwriter, and producer originally from New York City who now resides in Nashville. He comes from a deeply musical family headed by bassist and gospel musician Jeffrey L. White. His brothers include the acclaimed keyboardist and composer Cory Henry and musician Carlin White.

As a bassist, Jay has developed a style that blends jazz, gospel,

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International Black Theater Festival

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R&B, soul, country, and funk. He has performed and toured with artists including Robert Randolph, Amos Lee, Macy Gray, Michael McDonald, Damien Escobar, and gospel legend Timothy Wright. He has also been a member of Jonathan Scales Fourchestra, performing internationally and participating in music outreach and educational programs.

Damon DueWhite - Drums
Damon DueWhite is a highly respected drummer and percussionist whose career spans Broadway, jazz, R&B, blues, and world music. Born and raised near Philadelphia, he began playing drums at age six under the guidance of his father, a jazz drummer, and was performing professionally throughout the Philadelphia and New York tri-state area while still a teenager. He later attended the prestigious Berklee College of Music, where his studies expanded his musical vocabulary to include African, Caribbean, and global rhythms.

DueWhite has performed and recorded with an extraordinary range of artists, including Roberta Flack, Vanessa Williams, Hugh Masekela, George Duke, Harry Belafonte, Chaka Khan, Rachelle Ferrell, Joan Osborne, Regina Carter, and many others. His versatility and deep groove have made him a sought-after performer in both concert halls and recording studios around the world.

A veteran of numerous Broadway productions, DueWhite has held chair positions in major shows including MJ The Musical, Tina: The Tina Turner Musical, Hello, Dolly!, Motown: The Musical, The Color Purple, and Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk.

Drawing on influences from jazz, gospel, R&B, funk, and world music, Damon DueWhite brings a powerful sense of rhythm, musicality, and professionalism to every performance, making him one of today's most versatile and accomplished drummers.

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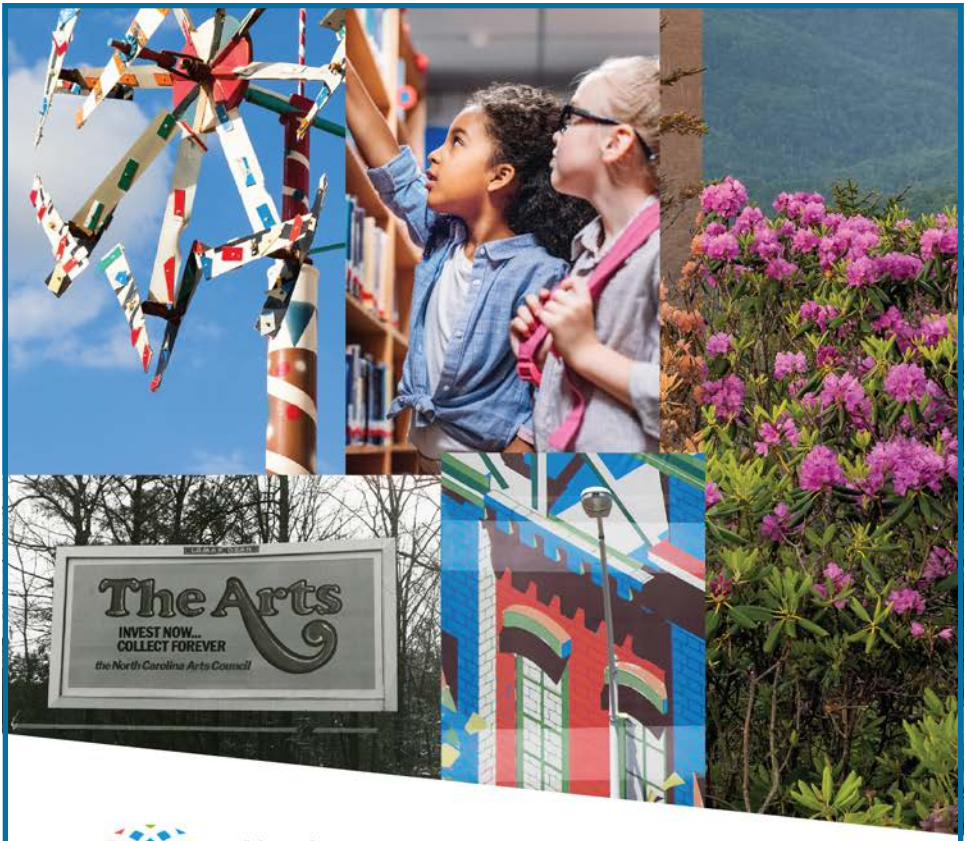
WHO'S WHO

Alan Grubner - Violin
Alan Grubner is a Brooklyn-based violinist, violist, composer, arranger, and producer known for blending jazz, folk, classical, and world music traditions. A graduate of Dartmouth College with further studies at Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory, he has performed at major venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Birdland, The Blue Note, and London's Symphony Hall.

Grubner is a longtime collaborator with jazz vocalist Allan Harris, serving as a featured soloist in *Cross That River* and *The Poetry of Jazz*. He was also a member of the acclaimed bluegrass group Nefesh Mountain and has appeared on recordings and performances ranging from Americana and jazz to film and television projects, including *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and the TV series *Louie*.

A sought-after arranger and recording artist, Grubner leads his own ensembles and has released projects including *Convergence*, *Long Road Home*, and *Resurgence*.

Seth Johnson - Guitar
Seth L Johnson is an established guitarist, a passionate composer, and a dedicated educator (of all ages and skill levels). Having earned his Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance from San Francisco State University, and his Master's degree from Mason Gross School of the Arts (under the tutelage of Vic Juris), Johnson grasps and interprets a well-rounded, expansive scope of musical genres including Jazz, Classical, African, Afro-Latin, Country, Funk, Blues, Bossa Nova, Hip Hop, and any popular North American styles. From free improvised music to Rock, to Jazz standards, he will have fun with all of it, approaching all musical styles with humility and respect.



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North Carolina Department of Natural & Cultural Resources

The North Carolina Arts Council is a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

WHO'S WHO

William Soleau - Director
William Soleau is a director and choreographer whose work spans theater, opera, film, and dance in the United States and abroad, with original productions performed in more than thirty countries. His theater and opera credits include Stravinsky's A Soldier's Tale with Christopher Lloyd; the West Coast production of Kismet directed by Lonny Price; Love, Love, Love, featuring the music of The Beatles in collaboration with Sir George Martin; A Midsummer Night's Dream at Richmond's Carpenter Center; Carmen, created for Marilyn Horne's 80th birthday at Santa Barbara's Granada Theatre; An American Tango at Los Angeles' Broad Theater; and Alan Knee's award winning play Syncopation at the New Vic Theatre.

For twenty-five years, Soleau served as Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer of State Street Ballet in Santa Barbara. During his tenure, he created more than fifty original works, directed numerous multidisciplinary productions, and established a reputation for storytelling that emphasizes character, collaboration, and theatricality.

A career highlight has been his fifteen-year creative partnership with vocalist, composer, and playwright Allan Harris. Their collaborations have included multiple theatrical and concert projects, culminating in Cross That River, an original musical exploring the history of Black cowboys in the American West.

Mr. Soleau resides in New York City with his wife Christine, a rehearsal director for the New York City Ballet.

Pat Harris - Producer
Pat Harris is an artist manager, producer, booking agent, and co-writer of Cross That River. Since 1997, she has managed the career of jazz vocalist and songwriter Allan Harris while producing tours, recordings, festivals, and special events through Love Productions Records. Harris has co-produced more than a dozen Allan Harris

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recordings and is the longtime producer of 2 Great Days of Jazz during the APAP Conference in New York.

As co-writer and producer of Cross That River, Harris helped shape the acclaimed musical that explores the untold history of Black Cowboys in the American West. Working alongside Allan Harris, she developed the story, book, and production over more than two decades, guiding the project from its original concept album to national tours and Off-Broadway productions.

A frequent panelist and advocate for jazz and performing artists, Harris has presented at industry conferences including IAJE, Jazz Congress, and Jazz Across Borders. Her work combines artistic development, producing, fundraising, touring, and audience engagement, with a particular focus on projects that illuminate overlooked stories in American history and culture.

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ENT 211 AD

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Why is a white director directing Cross That River, the story of a runaway slave's journey into the American West?

For me, the answer is simple. Allan Harris has written a beautiful and deeply moving story that deserves to be seen and heard.

Like many Americans, I grew up with a version of the West that left out an important part of the picture. I never learned about the thousands of Black cowboys, settlers, ranchers, and pioneers who helped shape the frontier. Through Allan's work, I discovered a history that was both eye-opening and inspiring.

But Cross That River is more than a history lesson. At its heart, it is the story of one man's search for freedom, dignity, purpose, and a place to belong. Blue's journey begins in bondage, but his hopes, fears, losses, and dreams speak to something deeply human and universal.

As artists, our responsibility is to bring meaningful stories to life and to help audiences see the world through another person's experience. I am grateful that Allan entrusted me with this remarkable work and proud to help bring his vision to the stage.

Because this is not only Black history. It is American history. And it is a story that deserves to be told.

William Soleau
Director & Choreographer
Cross That River

A remarkable scene to behold

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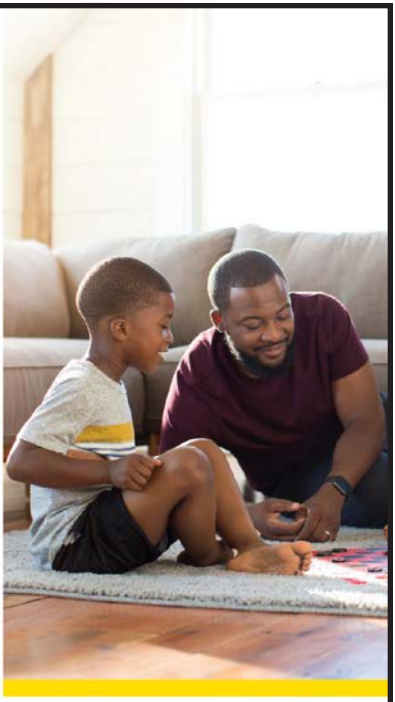

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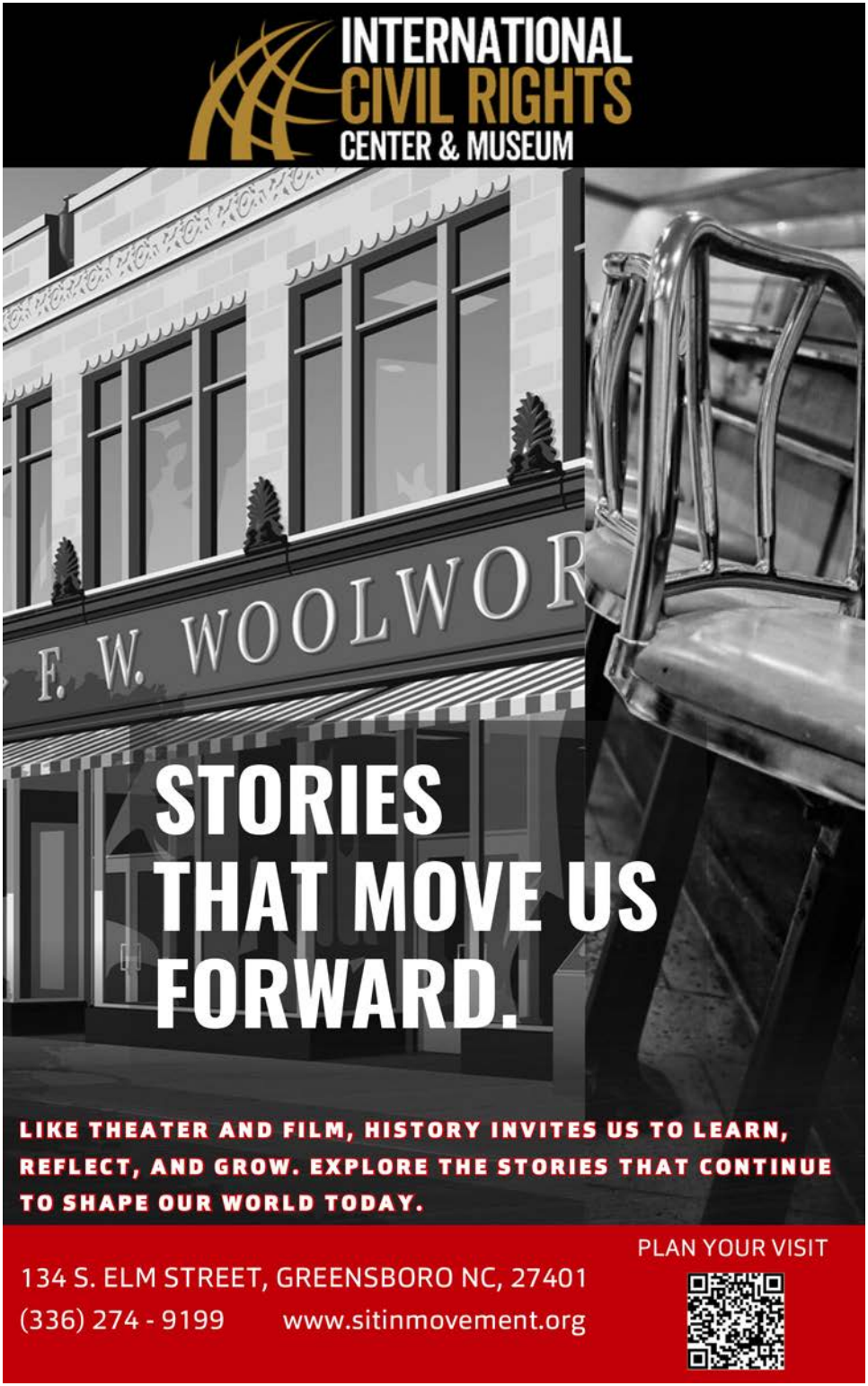
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Nico Amortegui, *Be a Wildflower*, 2025. © 2025 Nico Amortegui. Courtesy of the artist.

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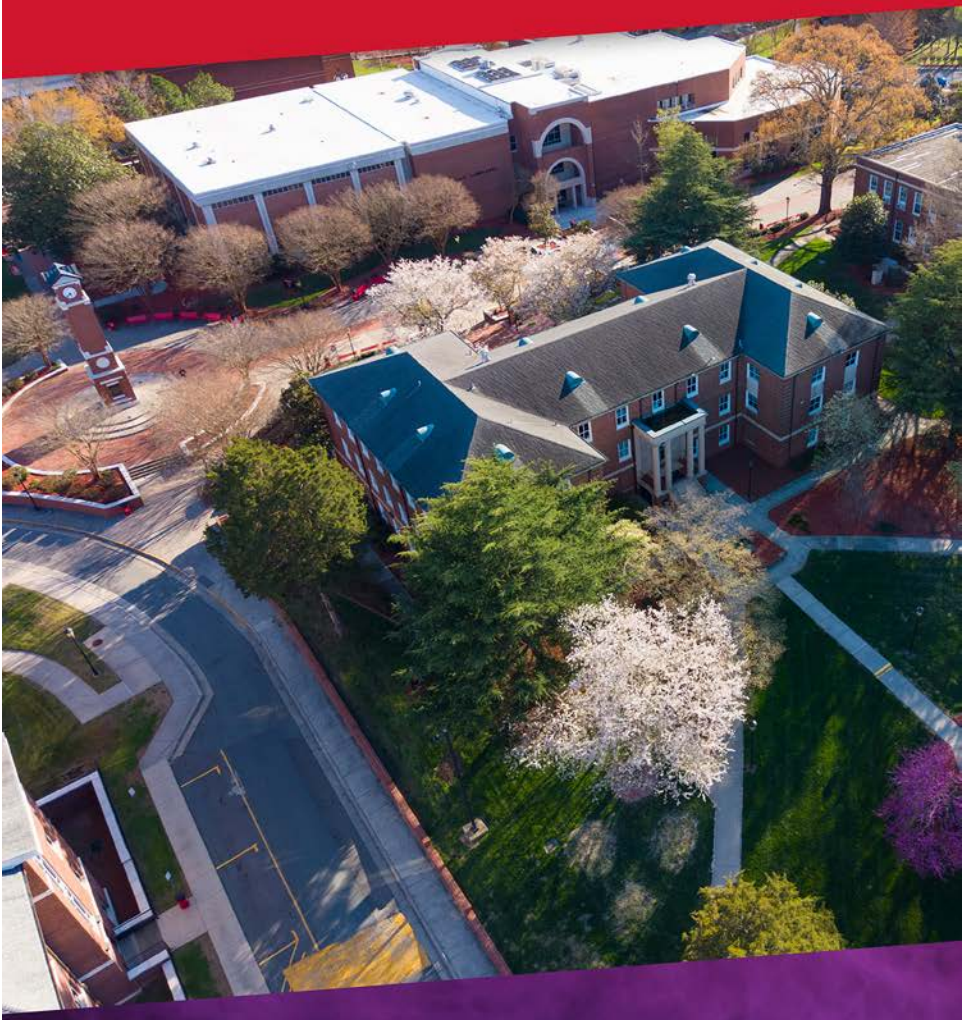

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