



TOWN OF KIAWAH  
*Arts*  
& CULTURAL  
EVENTS

2024-2025 Annual Report



# About the Arts Council

Established in 2004, the Town of Kiawah Island Arts and Cultural Events Council proposes and presents a season of performing arts events annually for the residents and visitors of Kiawah Island and beyond. Originally, the Council presented around 10 events a year. This season, we were able to produce 28 events for over 4,400 audience members!

The Arts Council is governed by the Town and currently comprised of 9 volunteer members who meet monthly to plan and manage their events. Read on to learn more about our dedicated members!

Mayor Brad Belt, Town Administrator Stephanie Tillerson, Communications Manager Meredith Blair, and Arts and Cultural Events Program Manager Caroline Wall serve on the Arts Council Board that meets quarterly to provide administrative oversight to the Arts Council. All event operations and logistics are handled by Arts and Cultural Events Program Manager Caroline Wall.

## 2024-2025 Impact



28  
Events



4,461  
Total  
Attendees



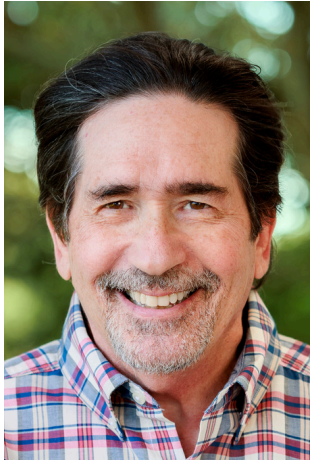
4,000  
E-News  
Subscribers



\$87,025  
Total  
Revenue

*Our mission is to enhance community appreciation and involvement in the performing arts within the Town of Kiawah Island and its environs by providing a diversity of planned programs*

# Letter from Our Chair



Our 2024-2025 season has been our most successful yet, and we are incredibly grateful for the continued support from our community. To our dedicated audiences—both residents and visitors—your unwavering enthusiasm for the arts over the past two decades has been a constant source of inspiration. Your energy and passion motivate us to keep bringing high-quality performing arts to our area. We also want to express our sincere appreciation to Mayor Brad Belt, Town Administrator Stephanie Tillerson, and the Town Council for recognizing the value of our work and for their ongoing support of both our current and future initiatives. A special thanks to our former Arts Manager Ruthie Foster for her outstanding contributions over the past four years, and to current Manager Caroline Wall, who has taken the reins with grace and efficiency during such a busy season.

Finally, I would like to recognize my fellow Arts Council members. Few outside our council truly understand the complexity of working with artists, agents, technicians, road managers, and event personnel to bring these productions to life. We often refer to the Arts Council as a "working committee," but the truth is, that description doesn't fully capture the dedication and effort involved. Your tireless commitment is the bedrock of our success, and I am deeply grateful to each of you.

Sincerely,  
David Wohl, Arts Council Chair

# 2024-2025 Season in Review

From September 2024 through May 2025, the Kiawah Arts Council delivered a record-breaking season marked by artistic diversity, exceptional quality, and enthusiastic community engagement. With six sold-out performances and a total of 29 thoughtfully curated events, the Council presented an impressive range of programming—from the ever-popular, no-cost Arts Film Series and vibrant Piano Bars to world-class chamber music, ballet, and international touring artists.

The first half of the season featured standout performances by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra; a multi-disciplinary cirque production starring Kiawah's own Kimberly Adele; and the beloved New Orleans jazz ensemble, Tuba Skinny. The new year began with the high-energy of *Liquid Pleasure*, followed by the legendary jazz pianist Judy Carmichael, Georgia Music Hall of Famers Atlanta Rhythm Section, and a stirring performance from Charleston Opera Theatre.

Annual favorites such as the Young Artist Series, the Blues by the Sea Festival, and the Piccolo Spoleto Preview continued to draw capacity crowds and received glowing feedback from attendees. These highlights represent just a portion of the Council's successful 2024–2025 season. The Kiawah Arts Council remains proud to serve as a cultural cornerstone for residents and visitors alike.





# Thank You!

Our events would not be possible without the essential support of our trusted vendors and community partners. We deeply appreciate Andrew Higdon from Hope Sound, Matt Varner from Prime Time Productions, Joseph Fox from Fox Music, and Chuck Higgins from Production Design Associates (PDA) for their hard work in producing our shows.

We are also grateful to our venue hosts: Barbara Steele and the team at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, Amy Cook at the Sandcastle, Michelle Duplessis at the Seabrook Island Clubhouse, Teri Hiers at Church of Our Saviour, the staff of Holy Spirit Catholic Church, and Karen Sassaman and the Freshfields Village team for their generosity and support of the Arts Council.

Special thanks go to Neal Kinard, the Town of Kiawah Island's videographer and photographer, and Dylan Keith of Kiawah Sands Photography for beautifully capturing our events. We also extend our sincere appreciation to Julie S., a dedicated Town of Kiawah staff member, for her invaluable support during event execution. A big round of applause for these incredible folks who help bring our shows to life!

# Get to Know the Arts Council!

## *Kimberly Adele*



I'm a cirque artist and an artistic director, producer, and show creator. Previously, I cofounded and grew a three-sector cirque arts company based in the Dallas, Texas area, leading the life cycle of cirque productions across the touring theatrical show division, the bespoke events division, and the youth troupe division.

Before falling in love with the cirque arts, I formed a non-profit dance company — creating and performing works that expressed artistic themes through a fusion of dance styles — and served as Artistic Director and President of the Board.

My professional experience on the stage includes acting, an art form I explored as an undergrad at Yale. As a child, I was a classical pianist. At the urging of my piano teacher at Salem College, I enrolled in college music theory courses starting at age 10, and transferred to the Dean of Music's studio and piano masterclass at age 12. Also a writer, poet, and composer/singer-songwriter, I enjoy combining many art forms when creating cirque shows, including the visual arts with kinetic sculptures and elements of staging.

Another aspect of my experience includes performing with The Dallas Opera in five operas. Applying a term perhaps most famously associated with opera, I revel in the Gesamtkunstwerk nature of cirque and the ability to freely create — and fly — unbounded by genre or form. I've worked nationally and internationally, performing in small venues to coliseum-sized spaces. Generally speaking, performances with off-the-charts musicality, expression, and technical brilliance — passionately and authentically shared — are my favorites to attend.

As an individual, I have a long history of being involved in the arts. On a personal note, I sang and acted my way through school, while also playing sports, and occasionally, studying! Professionally, my career during the past forty years in Marketing, Communications and Public Relations often included the responsibility of planning and management of events/celebrations ranging from small gatherings to large corporate affairs.

With that as a backdrop, and my history of visiting Kiawah for over eight years (almost three as a permanent resident) I have enjoyed multiple events by the Arts Council in the past. This year, I've particularly enjoyed events such as the Wednesday piano bars, Tuba Skinny, Sinatra - the Man and his Music, Liquid Pleasure and Tusk, the premier Fleetwood Mac tribute.

While we have had a great diversity of events on Kiawah, I've also had the pleasure to recently see a number of local theatre offerings as well as dynamic art exhibits in Charleston museums and galleries. In terms of musical shows, two excellent shows stood out: The Hendrix Experience, a tribute to the late Jimi Hendrix performed by some of the best blues/rock guitarists today and most recently, the High Water Festival which featured some of the best new talent in indie-folk, rock and country music such as Lord Huron and Amos Lee.

## *Rob Cushman*



## Joan Collar



When the Arts Council organized I attended most of their shows which were primarily held at the East Beach Conference Center. I think the most memorable were the Columbia Ballet and the Charleston Symphony. My late husband was military so I have had a varied career and lived abroad in Asia, Hawaii and Germany plus six states. My primary educational background was in psychology and my graduate work in school psychology and special education, but I have worn many hats from teaching special ed, school counselor, school psychologist, principal and national sales manager for Britannica. All my life I have been involved with music...playing the oboe in orchestras and bands, the piano in dance bands and accompanying song groups, singing choirs etc. And, I was a ballet dancer, figure skater and acted in and directed a number of plays and was in the movies, 'Hawaii' and 'The Legend of Bagger Vance'. All of these activities were based upon my love of music and the arts. Here at Kiawah we have hosted the Charleston Chamber Music for many years, my husband plays the piano for many Charleston Symphony events plus at the Arts Council piano bars. My love of the arts doesn't end with music, I also love the visual arts, theater and most any form of art that brings people together for the love of whatever that art form might be. We are so blessed in our area of the country to have so many talented performing artists. I am a great advocate of featuring them whenever we can.

## David Wohl



I first became aware of the activities of the TOKI Arts Council about 15 years ago when I was a part-time Kiawah resident living in Rock Hill, SC, and visiting Kiawah for family vacations. One year, I was browsing the calendar of events and noticed that the Council had booked a "new vaudeville" performer named Avner Eisenberg, also known as "Avner the Eccentric." I'd seen him perform in NYC and sponsored his appearance at West Virginia State University in the 1990s while I was an academic dean of Visual and Performing Arts. Excited to see him perform again, I quickly planned a trip to Kiawah and secured tickets, all the while wondering how the Kiawah Arts and Cultural Events Council managed to bring Avner the Eccentric to perform at Turtle Point Clubhouse! From that point on, we started scheduling our visits to the Island around the arts events we wanted to attend. When I moved here permanently in 2017, I was invited me to consider joining. With a doctorate in dramatic arts and over 50 years of experience acting, directing, and producing professional, academic, and community theatre, I felt a natural connection. Additionally, I've always had a passion for music—during my time in West Virginia, I worked closely with musicians and artists who produced the National Public Radio program Mountain Stage. I continue to immerse myself in live theatre and music, enjoying a wide range of genres and styles. I'm fortunate to have the opportunity to bring some of my favorite performers to Kiawah.

# Get to Know the Arts Council!

## *Jodi Rush*



When Jon and I bought a vacation home in Kiawah in 2010, we saw flyers for the Arts Council and began attending events. Having Bachelor's and Master's degrees in music, I offered my page-turning services to Charlie Lipuma, then Chair of the Arts Council; I turned pages for several performers as a "civilian." One afternoon, just before a performance of Avner the Eccentric, I was asked whether I could "see in the dark."

I said I could, and ended up running the massive machine Avner used for music and sound effects! In 2013, I ascended to an official role with the Arts Council and thus began one of the most rewarding and challenging jobs of my long career. I was immediately asked to take over the events that departing member had been scheduled to manage—the art film series, Piccolo Preview, Young Artists concerts, and several jazz and chamber groups. I looked forward to proposing my own events the following season. One of the things Jon and I always liked about the Kiawah Arts Council was the fact that they presented such a wide array of genres and artists. Because my own musical tastes are eclectic, it was a good fit for me as I looked for events and artists to champion and bring to our community. Favorites include: jazz pianist John Eaton, singer Wesla Whitfield, storytellers Jeanne Robertson and Andy Irwin, guitarist John Pizzarelli, pianists Bill Charlap and Bill Cunliffe, Conrad Tao and Caleb Teicher's Rhapsody in Blue, and chamber music by Andy Armstrong and Friends.

My background as an artist, show producer, and arts presenter gives me a unique perspective into the arts. I feel that serving on the Arts Council is one of the best ways for me to contribute meaningfully to the community.

Currently, I'm a photographer and visual artist working throughout the US. I also serve Kiawah residents and visitors through my company, Kiawah Sands Photography. Prior to

my photographic career, I cofounded a cirque arts company based in Dallas, Texas—with a professional events division producing bespoke shows for corporate and nonprofit clients, a touring division performing in sold-out theaters, and an elite youth troupe division training students through pre-professional levels. Some were selected for École Nationale de Cirque (Montreal) summer intensives and now work professionally. We cast a wide range of performers and I handled the full life cycle of show production, from creative development to business administration.

As a cirque artist, I performed a range of disciplines, specializing in juggling cube. My earlier experience includes touring North America in an acrobatic troupe, performing as base, middle, flier, and tumbler, including four-person-high pyramids. I also have performance experience as a vocalist and partner dancer.

I don't have a single favorite artistic genre or show, because I create and appreciate many forms of expression. When considering artists and shows for the Arts Council, I factor in the community's input. It's important to be responsive to the community while maintaining high standards for all events.

## *Dylan Keith*



# Get to Know the Arts Council!



We moved to Kiawah full time from New York City in 2005 but have owned property on Kiawah since 2001. We were only here part time from then until 2005. As full-time residents we were anxious to find some cultural events to attend on Kiawah and in Charleston and so we very quickly found out about the Arts Council events from friends and began to attend some of them. Back then they were mostly related to chamber music, choral music, blues by the sea, comedians, jazz, and the Charleston Symphony Orchestra. We knew a couple of people on the Council and so I ended up suggesting some musicians that I knew from NYC to one of them, Carol Ann Smalley. Not long after that Carol Ann decided to retire from the Council and she recommended me as her replacement. I was delighted and said yes right away as my husband and I had always attended many concerts and theater performances for many years when we lived in Minneapolis, Houston and New York City. In Charleston, soon after moving to Kiawah full time, we have had season tickets to Chamber Music Charleston, the CSO and PURE Theater, and every year I attend at least 25 Spoleto performances.

## *Bill Blizard*



Upon planning for retirement in the 1980's, I had the good fortune to see in a tennis magazine about some place I had never heard of before called Kiawah Island. On a trip to the South my wife & I came by this island and we fell in love with this place. That was 40 years ago. Fast forward 2 decades and I spoke with Town Counselor Leo Fishman about the development of a project for the arts similar to the Cultural Affairs Program that I founded as the head of the Art Department at Springfield College in Massachusetts. He said, "Write it up!". Mayor Bill Wert confirmed the idea with the Council and the Kiawah Island Arts and Cultural Events Council was born. Thanks to a dedicated set of committee members, even going into 2026 we bring a marvelous variety of events featuring outstanding performers while enjoying community support. It has been a great adventure that has brought me much satisfaction.

## *Kristin Thompson*



Of the first Arts Council events that I remember attending, CSO played in a tent at Freshfields in 2012; at least one piano bar around the same time and SC Ballet performance of Dracula at the East Beach Conference Center. I saw a notice about an open position on the Arts Council in 2020. I had recently retired and sold our business managing nine different national and international trade associations, running their conventions and meetings which involved contracting for space and entertainment; so, I thought that my skill set of 25 years in that area would be a good match for the volunteer position. I have a broad interest in the performance arts ranging from classical, folk, opera, ballet and rock and roll. I particularly enjoy the diversity of genres that we present to audiences every season and I look forward to our annual Blues by the Sea festival every April.

# Don't Miss A Beat!

Scan the QR code to the right to sign up for our email list and be among the first to know about upcoming events on Kiawah and Arts Council news.

Promise we won't spam your inbox!



We'll be releasing the full season lineup soon, and you will not want to miss any details! Follow us on socials to stay connected.



@kiawaharts



Kiawah Island  
Arts Council

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## Participate in our Annual Audience Survey

At the end of each season, the Kiawah Island Arts Council conducts an audience survey to understand what we're doing well, discover areas where we can improve, and gather valuable insights we wouldn't otherwise have.

Please scan the QR code below to complete the survey thoughtfully — we truly appreciate your input!



The survey is designed to take around 5 minutes to complete and will be accepting responses now through June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

# Season Highlights



*Judy Carmichael Trio*



*Blues by the Sea: The Shaelyn Band*



*Young Artist Series:  
Caleb Borick*



*TUSK: Fleetwood Mac Tribute*



*Liquid Pleasure*

*Photos (top to bottom): Neal Kinard, Town of Kiawah Island (top three);  
Dylan Keith, Kiawah Sands Photography (remaining)*

# Save the Date!



2025-2026  
Season Kickoff

FEATURING  
*Will Thompson Band*

Friday  
Aug. 1st  
6-9PM

Freshfields  
Village  
Green

PRESENTED BY THE TOWN OF KIAWAH ISLAND ARTS COUNCIL

The poster features a collage of people at an outdoor event, a central graphic of a sunset over a lake with a red van and a band, and a red van at the bottom.

No  
tickets  
necessary!

Tickets  
on Sale  
in July!



Aug 17  
7:30PM

# Love Supreme

CHARLESTON JAZZ ORCHESTRA

West Beach Conference Center  
2 Shipwatch Rd.  
Kiawah Island SC, 29455

HEATHER RICE  
TOMMY BROWN JR.

TOWN OF KIAWAH  
*Arts*  
& CULTURAL  
EVENTS

The poster shows a jazz orchestra performing on stage with a conductor. Two inset photos show Heather Rice and Tommy Brown Jr.

View events and purchase tickets online beginning  
July 1st at <https://www.kiawahisland.org/events>