"There's no other festival quite like Big Ears." PASTE



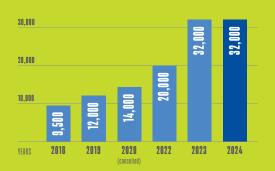
OUR MISSION

Big Ears works alongside artists, audiences, and communities to create joyful and transcendent cultural experiences that defy boundaries, fuel curiosity, ignite the spirit, and nourish the soul.

WHO WE ARE

Big Ears has been connecting audiences to exceptional, unforgettable cultural experiences since 2009. The festival became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2016 and works with a wide range of supporters and partner organizations to continue fulfilling its mission.

Big Ears continues to showcase the world's most acclaimed artists and welcomes thousands of individuals to its performances and events each year.



OUR TEAM

Ashley Capps | Founder / Executive δ Artistic DirectorBryan Crow | Festival DirectorMorgan Fleming | Administrative CoordinatorCasey Fox | Director of DevelopmentDonna Mitchell | Communications DirectorMatt Morelock | City Songs Project Coordinator

2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John T. Winemiller | Chair Katharine Pearson Criss | Vice-Chair Richard Stair | Treasurer Paul Parris | Secretary Lauren Sampson Bowman **Ashley Capps** Anthony B. Creamer II Dr. Amy Elias **Mark Grayson** Dr. Sally C. Johnson **Cynthia Moxley Clara Prinston** Haseeb Qureshi **Madeline Rogero Tommie Rush** John Lynch Sanders

"One of the world's greatest music bashes."

NEW YORK TIMES

FROM OUR FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

We can still get carried away remembering the fabulous, unforgettable weekend that was Big Ears 2024.

From Adrianne Lenker sitting alone, front and center, transforming the Knoxville Civic Auditorium into her own private living room to Jon Batiste and band levitating the building in a joyous and inspirational musical revival, this year's festival overflowed with musical highlights. In the moments between, Herbie Hancock and his remarkable band led us on a journey through decades of musical innovation; Charles Lloyd and his all-star group took listeners on a richly nuanced spiritual journey; and Laurie Anderson's mesmerizing "Let X = X" presented work spanning half a century in a context that spoke profoundly and urgently to the current moment. The legendary composer/woodwind player Henry Threadgill's kaleidoscopic, multi-faceted legacy was brought to life in five uniquely different presentations; and the mercurial and ever-surprising Rhiannon Giddens transcended all musical borders in three dazzling performances. We danced late into the night to the spinning of Detroit techno legend Carl Craig; followed André 3000 and his flutes to new, previously unimagined realms; and celebrated Marc Ribot's 70th birthday with the extra special rare treats of having Chocolate Genius and Evan Lurie's Quintet with Bandoneon return to live performance. It was a weekend filled with countless gems: one highlight after another.

Behind the scenes, 2024 was a pivotal year for Big Ears as well. After years of steady, continual growth in size, scope, and attendance – culminating in our triumphant "10 Years of Big Ears" celebration in 2023 – we made the decision to cap attendance at 2023 levels and retain essentially the same physical footprint of the festival for this year, working within those parameters to enhance and elevate the festival experience for all.

We've always had a great team behind Big Ears, but 2024 hit a new level as we have worked to rebuild our organization in the often-unpredictable post-Covid landscape. This year, things came together as never before with both our full-time staff and extended festival production partners. We have now built the optimal and deeply experienced team needed to bring Big Ears to life and build for the future.

Our Big Ears board has continued to evolve as well, retaining a strong local base of supporters and advocates while expanding to include enthusiastic members from throughout the country, reflecting geographic as well as demographic diversity of the Big Ears audience itself.

The richness and beauty of the Big Ears experience is rooted in our home, in our sense of place, in the richness, history, and character of our region. In 2024, our integration and connections with our local community have continued to grow and expand. At the Knoxville Museum of Art, the Visit Knoxville Visitors Center, the UT Downtown Gallery, and the RED Gallery, thousands of



visitors enjoyed free concerts and special events like Kenny Wollesen's Wolle-Sonic Massages and Laraaji's Laughter Meditation Workshops. One festival highlight for me was seeing the excitement on the faces of children from the Boys and Girls Club of the Tennessee Valley as they got a taste of what Big Ears has to offer, both as "VIP" audience members and in a behind-the-scenes venue tour.

Our interactive program, City Songs, grew in 2024 as well, with artists like Cyro Baptista, Leyla McCalla, and Suzi Analogue collaborating with students and community organizations to create a moving series of music videos that explore life in our community.

These are challenging, turbulent times for us all and the essential need for art and culture to bring us together, to share with one another, learn from one another, to build community and celebrate the beauty and potential of the human spirit, has never been greater.

If you are reading this, you are part of this remarkable adventure. The potential of what we can accomplish together is limited by nothing more than our ability to imagine what is possible. Together, we will continue to explore new opportunities, build new relationships, and push the boundaries of what we – and Big Ears – can become.

The best is yet to come.

ASHLEY CAPPS Founder / Executive & Artistic Director

WHO WE ARE

Impact Areas

ARTS PROGRAMMING

Big Ears presents world-class performances that provide innovate, enriching, and transformative experiences for all.

ARTS ACCESS

Big Ears works closely with community partners to increase access to, and engagement with, the arts in ways that spark curiosity, inspire deep listening, and open minds to a broad spectrum of music and creativity.

Music Festival of the Year spin magazine

B

2024 Big Ears Festival

The eleventh Big Ears Festival, held from March 21 - 24, 2024, featured over 200 world-class musical performances, discussions, interactive workshops, installations, film screenings, surprise collaborations, and unexpected artistic encounters. The festival took place across a walkable network of historic theaters, nightclubs, churches, museums, and outdoor spaces in downtown Knoxville.

B



days 16 venues **221** performances, concerts, and presentations **32K** visitors from 49 states and 18 countries

2024 ARTISTS

Adrianne Lenker Ahleuchatistas aja monet Amythyst Kiah Angelic Brothers (John <u>Medeski &</u> Kirk Knuffke) Anna Webber Anssi Karttunen Aoife O'Donovan Armand Hammer Ash Fure bar italia Beth Orton billy woods Bitchin Bajas Bonnie "Prince" Billy Brad Mehldau Brandon Ross' Phantom Station Cedric Burnside Ceramic Dog Charles Lloyd Ches Smith: Laugh Ash Chocolate Genius, Inc. Christian McBride claire rousay Colin Stetson Colleen Cyro Baptista's Chama Darcy James Argue's Secret Society Dave Holland Quartet David Virelles Davóne Tine & THE TRUTH **Digable** Planets dragonchild x Sunken Cages Drum Major Instinct Edgar Mever Eli Winter Trio Elliott Sharp & Eric Mingus Evan Lurie: Quintet with Bandoneon Eyvind Kang & Jessika Kenney Fatoumata Diawara Faun Fables Finom Flv Siifu Francesco Turrisi Fred Frith

The Harvest Time Project: A Tribute to Pharaoh Sanders Hatis Noit Helen Gillet Henry Threadgill Herbie Hancock Hermanos Gutiérrez Horse Lords Hurray for the Riff Raff Jake Blount Jakob Bro Jana Horn Jason Moran JG Thirlwell JJJJJerome Ellis Jlin Joan Shelley Joanna Sternberg Joe Henry Joe Russo's Selcouth Quartet John Medeski Jon Batiste Joseph Allred Julian Lage δ the Speak to Me Band Ka Baird Kassa Overall Kenny Wollesen Knoxville Symphony Chamber Orchestra Kokoroko Kristen Hersh Kronos Quartet | 50 Years Kurt Vile δ the Violators Laurie Anderson Leyla McCalla Marc Ribot Mary Halvorson Matt Mitchell Mavi Mighty Poplar Min Xiao-Fen with River Guergarian Molly Lewis Molly Tuttle වි Golden Highway Mr. Sun Myra Melford's Fire and Water Myriam Gendron





ANDRÉ 3000: NEW BLUE SUN LIVE

Performing in support of his chart-topping ambient flute recording, the seven-time Grammy winner and cultural luminary presented five intimate concerts across the Big Ears weekend.

HENRY THREADGILL CELEBRATION

One of the most forward-thinking composers and multiinstrumentalists in American music, Threadgill brought five different live music projects to Big Ears 2024.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE: RHIANNON GIDDENS

The two-time Grammy Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning singer and instrumentalist, MacArthur Fellow, and composer of opera, ballet, and film returned to Big Ears to explore and present multiple facets of her artistry.

KING BRITT'S BLACKTRONIKA

Philadelphia-born visionary DJ, producer, and educator King Britt curated an extraordinary lineup of groundbreaking Black electronic music artists for Big Ears 2024.

LA MONTE YOUNG & MARIAN ZAZEELA: Just charles

Just Charles δ Cello in the Romantic Chord in a Setting of Abstract #1 from Quadrilateral Phase Angle Traversals in Dream Light, performed by Charles Curtis, a monumental essay in sustained sound and gradually shifting light projection centers on the voice of Curtis's cello playing, improvisational within the rigorous formal framework of Young's composition.

2024 ARTISTS

Nadah El Shazly Nik Bärtsch's RONIN R.B. Morris and His New Band Resavoir Rhiannon Giddens Ringdown (Caroline Shaw δ Danni Lee) Robin Holcomb Roc Marciano Roger Eno Sam Amidon Samora Pinderhughes Secret Chiefs 3 Senryu Sexmob Shabaka Shahzad Ismaily Silkroad Ensemble Slauson Malone 1 Sleepytime Gorilla Museum Sofia Rei හි Jorge Roeder Son Rompe Pera Tennessee Sheiks The Messthetics with James Brandon Lewis Third Coast Percussion Thurston Moore Titan to Tachyons Tomas Fujiwara 7 Poets Trio Tomeka Reid Quartet Tord Gustavesen Trio Tredici Bacci Trevor Dunn's Trio-Convulsant avec Folie á Quatre Trio Mediæval Unwound Void Patrol Wayne Horvitz Gravitas Quartet Wyatt Ellis Yasmin Williams Zoe Keating Zsela

KING BRITT'S Blacktronika

Brandon Coleman
Carl Craig
Charlie Dark MBE
Colloboh
Computer Jay
Dibia\$e
DJ Heather
Suzi Analogue
Elsa M'Bala
King Britt
KMRU
Laraaji & Suphala
Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe
Tyondai Braxton
Yvette Janine Jackson

POETRY & Literature

Black Atticus Dasan Ahanu Dasha Kelly Hanif Abdurraqib Marilyn Kallet R.B. Morris Rhea "Sunshine" Carmon Ross Gay Sam Stephenson Tshaka Campbell







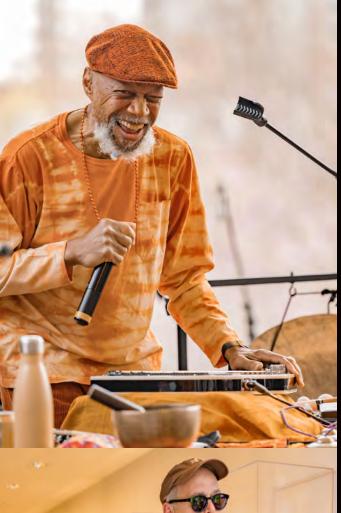














STEVE KEENE

Big Ears, in collaboration with the Hirschhorn Collection, proudly presented an exhibition of the prolific painter's work, while festival guests were able to visit his ad-hoc studio each day at the RED Gallery in Knoxville's Old City.

KENNY WOLLESEN'S WOLLE-SONIC MASSAGES

In addition to events at the KMA, percussionist Kenny Wollesen offered an al fresco edition of his unique Wolle-Sonic Massage on Market Square. Using custommade instruments, Wollesen created immersive soundscapes that washed over participants, creating a captivating blend of sound and relaxation.

LAUGHTER: THE BEST MEDICINE

Laraaji's interactive playshops promoted joy and relaxation through laughter yoga and playful exercises.

CONVERSATIONS

46 musicians, writers, journalists, and academics participated in 25 free panels, talks, and discussions.

FILM FESTIVAL

Big Ears teamed up with filmmakers and curators Lily Keber and Zac Manuel to present a full docket of featurelength films, shorts, and discussions at the Regal Riviera in downtown Knoxville.

ESSENTIAL TREMORS

Big Ears partnered with WYPR's podcast Essential Tremors for a series of recorded conversations that allowed Big Ears artists to explore the question: What music shaped who you are?

UT DOWNTOWN GALLERY

Big Ears partnered with Dogwood Arts and the UT Downtown Gallery to present *Y'all Don't Hear Me: The Black Appalachia, An Ode to Nikki.* Curated by Kreneshia Whiteside-McGee, the exhibition highlighted the values and legacy of Black Appalachian culture, featuring native and local Black artists from across 13 Appalachian states.







Community Impact

ARTS, EDUCATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, the Big Ears Festival continued working to bring music, art, and culture to a wider audience. Partnering with public schools and local nonprofit organizations, Big Ears offered unique opportunities for youth and underserved communities to experience the festival's diverse programming. Special initiatives included workshops, free performances, and interactive art sessions, all designed to engage and inspire participants.

CITY SONGS

City Songs is an ongoing community outreach program that engages local young people as well as professional musicians to create new compositions and music videos rooted in personal stories and specific places around Knoxville. The resulting videos are then put on a story map, creating a rich tapestry of place, memory, and emotion. You can see the story map with songs from 2022-2024 at https://bigearsfestival.org/city-songs/.

This project was supported in part by support from the Hobson Wood Foundation, the Aslan Foundation, and the Tennessee Arts Commission "Our young clients at the Joy of Music School were transported into an environment of professionalism, committed artistry, and dedication to quality in their City Songs collaboration with Big Ears."

-FRANCIS GRAFFEO, JOY OF MUSIC SCHOOL





BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB FIELD TRIP

Big Ears teamed up with the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley to give their members a whirlwind afternoon filled with live music, vibrant art exhibits, and even a behind-the-scenes peek of a pre-show soundcheck at the Mill and Mine.

BIG EARS SCHOLARSHIP

Big Ears is a hub for creativity, community, and conversation. We strive to include as many artists as possible in this dialogue by making our festival accessible to those who aren't performing but wish to participate. To foster creative growth and inspiration, we offer a scholarship program that provides free weekend passes to emerging artists in financial need. This year, we granted thirty-five scholarships to artists from across the country, with a special focus on those from Tennessee.

This project was supported by Patti and John Haslett and Jim Hartsell.

"The weeks following Big Ears I wrote more than I had in months. Something about the experience ignited a creative spark and hunger within me."

BIG EARS INTERN PROGRAMS

Big Ears' partnerships with the University of Tennessee and Pellissippi State Community College provide students a chance to experience working in a fast-paced festival environment where they can make use of both their technical and problem-solving skills – invaluable professional experience that fast-tracks students on their path to working success.

School Of Retail, Hospitality, And Tourism Management, University Of Tennessee

For the second year, a cohort of Hospitality Ambassadors from the University of Tennessee's School of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management assisted the festival's artist relations team to ensure that performers had the best Big Ears Experience possible – from stocking green rooms to coordinating transportation to and from venues.

Audio Production & Engineering Program, Pellissippi State Community College

Guided by faculty from the audio production engineering department, media technologies students joined professional staff in nearly every venue, earning valuable firsthand experience in live-event audio engineering.

-KYLIE , SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

2024 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Architectural Antics Belle Morris Elementary School Boys and Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley Dancers Studio Dogwood Arts Drums Up, Guns Down East Tennessee Bluegrass Association Friends of the Knox County Public Library Fulton High School Historic Bijou Theatre Historic Tennessee Theatre Ignite! Dance Ensemble
- Ijams Nature Center The Joy of Music School Knoxville Community Media Knoxville Museum of Art Pellissippi State Community College RED Gallery Tennesseans for the Arts UTK Department of Humanities UTK Department of Humanities UT Downtown Gallery UT Libraries UTK School of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management WDVX YWCA Phyllis Wheatley Center



BOUNDLESS: ARTISTS IN THE ARCHIVES

Big Ears partnered with UT Libraries for their ongoing project Boundless: Artists in the Archives, which invites musicians and other artists to visit the UT Libraries' archives and create original works inspired by the unique primary sources preserved there. 2024's artist was singer-songwriter Amythyst Kiah, who composed a song inspired by firsthand accounts of the deadly wildfires that swept through Gatlinburg and the Great Smoky Mountains in 2016. She premiered the work at a free performance at the Knoxville Museum of Art on the eve of the Big Ears Festival.

When towering giants become funeral pyres And havens become cinder and smoke Sorrow echoes in the wilderness and wind, But sun will shine once again

FROM "FROM THE CHARRED REMAINS" By amythyst kiah

Economic Impact & Finances

Big Ears draws crowds of thousands to Knoxville from across the country and around the globe. During their time here, Big Ears audiences make Downtown Knoxville their home – filling our hotels, dining in our restaurants, and supporting local businesses.

\$69.8 million

was contributed to the Knoxville economy*



in labor income was paid to Knoxville employees as a result of Big Ears

*Source: AngelouEconomics, Big Ears Festival 2024

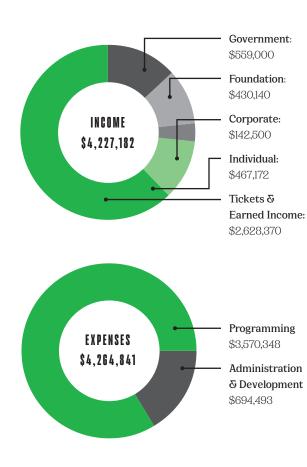
567 full-time job equivalents were hired or sustained

NON-PROFIT DIRECT SUPPORT

Big Ears \$177,525

in 2024 in fees to and services from local nonprfits,

including the historic Tennessee and Bijou Theatres, the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, WDVX, Real Good Kitchen, and the River & Rail Theatre Company.



TOTAL ASSETS: \$2,683,896

"Big Ears Festival is a major driver of business in Downtown Knoxville and a breath of fresh air after the slower winter months. We appreciate Big Ears' significant contribution to the economic and cultural landscape of Downtown Knoxville, as well as their unwavering support of our community."

MICHELE HUMMEL, Executive Director, Downtown Knoxville Alliance



"A festival unlike any other"

THE FADER

A note from our Board Chair



The four days of the Big Ears Festival are a highlight of my year. And I know I'm not alone. There are many people to thank for the energy, the experiences, and the excitement of those four days. You, our dedicated patrons, are at the top of the list. So, thank you for your unwavering support. Your generosity has been the cornerstone of our mission, allowing us to pursue artistic excellence and enrich the community in meaningful ways.

This year's festival was another resounding success, highlighting the incredible diversity and vibrancy of contemporary music and art. From Third Coast Percussion's amazing show at the KMA to Andre 3000's unforgettable set at St John's Cathedral, to Laurie Anderson's reprise of Big Science at the Civic Auditorium, 2024 was one for the books. But the impact doesn't stop there. Your contributions have helped us continue building meaningful community partnerships, ensuring the transformative power of the arts reaches more people than ever before. Together, we're fostering the next generation of artists and cultivating a deeper love for the arts throughout East Tennessee.

In this, my final year as chair of the Board of Directors, I can't help but reflect on what an extraordinary journey it's been. Leading this board has been a truly rewarding experience, and I'm deeply grateful for the chance to work alongside such passionate and creative individuals. Watching Big Ears grow and make its mark on Knoxville and beyond has been nothing short of thrilling.

I celebrate this year's achievements with a sense of excitement for what lies ahead. With your continued support, we're eager to explore bold new ways to create transcendent cultural experiences for you and the entire Big Ears family. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey and helping us build a bright future for Big Ears.

With gratitude,

Well.

John T. Winemiller 2023-2024 Chair Big Ears Festival Board of Directors

Thank you to our donors

JULY 1, 2023 THRU JUNE 30, 2024

We have carefully reviewed the names that are listed. However, if you find an error or omission, please accept our apologies, and contact us at development@bigearsfestival. org so we can correct our records.

\$25,000 AND Greater

Anonymous Ann δ Steve Bailey Alex Rigopulos δ Sachi Sato

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Ashley Capps and Birgit Clark Anthony B. Creamer III Anonymous Richard Stair Tall Tree Fund

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Jeffrey δ Susan Aronowitz Stephanie Bush δ Jill Nilson Eron δ Valerie Epstein Eric Gordon δ Judy Abel Jim Hartsell Sally Mitchell δ Crispin Spencer Andy Oakes Sibyl Wray

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Jeanette Kelleher ⊗ Greg Stein Sharon Leslie Tom Levandoski Peter Lewis Rick Maurer & Kathy Barton Neil McBride & Maureen Dunn McBride Reiner Michalke Harry Moss Lindsey R. Nelson Hei Park Madeline Rogero Robert Saler David Shearer Richard Thurston & Marianne Pulfer Elie Weiss Philip Young Kirk Zehnder

\$100 - \$399

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Shwetha Choodamani Donald Cohen PG Cohen Gordon Coker Steve Compton Michelle & Tim Corbett Adriana Cordero $\overline{\delta}$ Geordie Grindle Carolyn Corley Joe ∂ Debbie Corrado Timothy Crosby Bill & Kat Dabbs Jenny Daniel Tara Davies Bob Deck Andrew Denson & Kelly Larson Phillip Disher & Carla Jeffries Jeanna Disney Erin Donnell & Aaron Pennington Kenneth L. Doroshow Kate Dumbleton Thomas & Kathe Dunder Carolyn Duvall Dr. Sebnem Duzgun David & Patricia Earnhardt Amy J. Elias Yale Evelev Jose Fernandez Casey Fox & Jesse Fox Mayshark Deidre Ford Brooks Frank Jeff & Shelley Fratus Christine Freidel \eth Doug Varley Fully Altered Furrythug Andrew Futreal & Jennifer McQuade Emilie Galambos Tom W. Garrison Michael Gassmann Mark Gentley Rodney Gibbs Amy Gibson Marc Gilley Ian Glazer Charles Glisson \eth Joyce Feld Mathan Gore Lauren Gray Roger K. Gray Tom δ Paulette Groves Rosalind I. J. Hackett Kathy Hall Patricia Hall Emily Harenza Kimberly Henry Catherine & Bruce Henschen Brent Heyl

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\$1 - \$99

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"The most open-minded music gathering in the country."

THE NEW YORKER

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bigearsfestival.org



"Big Ears is like a miracle."