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Arts & Issues brings international diversity

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Regional

Arts & Issues brings international diversity

"Arts and Issues," the series of performances and lectures at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville that has brought artists and speakers – along with audiences – to this side of the Mississippi River for more than 28 years, has a particularly exciting upcoming season. The first performance will be Oct. 11 with a new show called "New Dance Horizons."

"We are collaborating with Dance St. Louis," said Grant Andree, program director of "Arts and Issues." "This is kind of an exciting event because this is being produced by Dance St. Louis, which is one of the premier presenters of dance in the United States. What Michel Utthoff, artistic director, is doing is commissioning four dances with four choreographers from across the country."

Nikki Giovanni, a world-renowned poet, writer and commentator, will speak on Nov. 5. "She has won numerous awards and I am excited to bring her on board because she is one of the two authors that we are bringing this year," Andree said. Giovanni is known for her frankness on equality issues. Her presentation coincides with "The Year of the Book" that is being organized by the Department of English Language and Literature at SIUE.

This will be followed on Nov. 29 by "Neil Berg's 100 years of Broadway." It is about the greatest hits of Broadway over the past 100 years. Berg is a composer in New York and has worked on many Broadway shows. Among the musical pieces that will be performed include selections from "The Phantom of the Opera," "Les Miserables," "Cats," and "Jesus Christ Super Star."

On March 21, the audience will have the opportunity to listen to the music of Karla Bonoff. "She is considered one of the best singer songwriters of the past four generations," Andree said. "She is a guitarist and plays the piano. You'll be familiar with some of the songs that



Photo courtesy of La Familia Valera Miranda

The Cuban musical group La Familia Valera Miranda

she'll play that night."

Probably the most exciting of the performances will take place on April 4 with the presentation of "La Familia Valera Miranda," one of the most famous Cuban musical groups. Due to the political situation between the United States and Cuba, the group has not been able to perform in this country for the last

10 years.

"La Familia goes back several generations, with a musical tradition that is a combination of a number of different styles from Africa, from the Hispanic community, from Haiti, Jamaica, and all these traditions are combined to create these songs," said Andree. "It should be a real treat to hear a group like that."

Some of the pieces they will perform will be in the style of the "Cuban son." This is a peculiar type of music in which a soloist improvises lyrics over a general musical theme. The complicated effort to bring this group to SIUE was led by Calvin Jarrell of the department of theater and dance.

On April 16 the public will have the

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extraordinary opportunity to hear the nationally acclaimed author and humorist David Sedaris. "In one word, I think he is hilarious," Andree said. "He has sold over 7 million books and is on NPR all the time. I certainly expect this to be a sold-out performance. He has been on the bestseller list of The New York Times and has been nominated for three Grammys. He is really at the top of this game right now," said Andree, who added that Sedaris would stay after the show to sign books.

The "Arts and Issues" season will culminate with a performance of the experimental theater series "Xfest," organized by SIUE's department of theater and dance. "It is going to be very interesting," Andree said. "It is based on the interception of technology, the new century and women's role in society. It takes place in Paris in 1913 and during the course of this theater piece they build a three quarter size monoplane on stage. This is one of those things that Xfest is becoming famous for, and that is fascinating theater pieces that show theater in a way you have not seen before. I think the people that have come to the Xfest and have seen these different companies, always come back because it is so entertaining."

For more information on Arts and Issues call 618-650-5774 or visit www.siu.edu/artsandissues.

Aldemaro Romero is the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. His show, "Segue," can be heard every Sunday morning at 9 a.m. on WSIE, 88.7 FM. He can be reached at College_Arts_Sciences@siue.edu.