

## A momentous year for Cincinnati's arts

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*New leaders, cultural icons in the news and a New York showcase were some of the arts highlights of 2014*



(Photo: The Enquirer/Cara Owsley)

A new theater was announced, Cincinnati Ballet turned 50 and the region became a hub for photography – those were just some of the highlights in the arts in 2014.

Supporters of two cultural icons – Union Terminal and Music Hall – are breathing a collective sigh of relief, now that both major renovation projects are on their way to fruition – but not without unexpected twists and turns last year.

The arts scene welcomed new leaders, and artist Nam June Paik's Metrobot returned to stand watch over the Contemporary Arts Center. Tens of thousands of people cheered at Lumenocity, and thousands more cheered on Cincinnati's arts and culture during a whirlwind week in New York City.

Arts writers Julie Engebrecht, Janelle Gelfand and David Lyman each selected a few of the year's high points.



Cincinnati Art Museum director Cameron Kitchin speaks to Melanie Beyerstofer's sixth-grade class at Silverton Paideia Academy. (Photo: Enquirer file/Carrie Cochran)

## New leaders in the arts

[Cameron Kitchin](#) replaced embattled Cincinnati Art Museum director [Aaron Betsky](#) after a seven-month search.

Kitchin, formerly director of Brooks Museum of Art in Memphis, officially assumed his role Oct. 1. He became the ninth director in the museum's 133-year history and was welcomed with a [\\$6 million endowment gift](#), one of the museum's largest ever, from The Louise Dieterle Nippert Trust. Known in Memphis for his focus on education and his work in strategic planning, [arrived in Cincinnati with similar priorities](#). Follow Kitchin on Twitter at [@Cameron\\_Kitchin](#).

Over at ArtsWave (formerly the Fine Arts Fund), [Alecia Kintner assumed the leadership](#) from Mary McCullough-Hudson, who led the community arts funding organization for 20 years. Kintner's priority is to align the power of ArtsWave's [\\$12 million in funds raised annually](#) with other community efforts, such as improving neighborhoods and attracting a more innovative workforce. Follow Kintner on Twitter at [@AleciaKintner](#).

No sooner had Union Terminal won a sales tax issue from voters for its \$208 million renovation project, than Museum Center chief executive Doug McDonald announced he would retire. Elizabeth Pierce, chief operating officer, will become interim CEO on Jan. 15.



Joshua Steele, former theater and facilities manager at The Carnegie, is the new president of the League of Cincinnati Theatres. The league was formed in 1999 with a \$10,000 collaboration grant from the then-Fine Arts Fund. Among his goals, Steele plans to develop a website for Cincinnati theater that includes show listings, previews and reviews, ticketing links, classes and audition listings.

Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra said goodbye to music director Mischa Santora in June, and welcomed conductor Kelly Kuo as its interim music director. Kuo will see the orchestra through its newly-planned festival season in August, as the board is launches an international search for a permanent musical leader.

Craig Hella Johnson began his era as director of the Vocal Arts Ensemble in 2014. He succeeded Donald Nally.

[Andrew Hungerford](#) replaced [Eric Vosmeier](#) as artistic director at Know Theatre. Meanwhile, Vosmeier moved to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center to create a [new, major performance series](#). - **Julie Engebrecht and Janelle Gelfand**

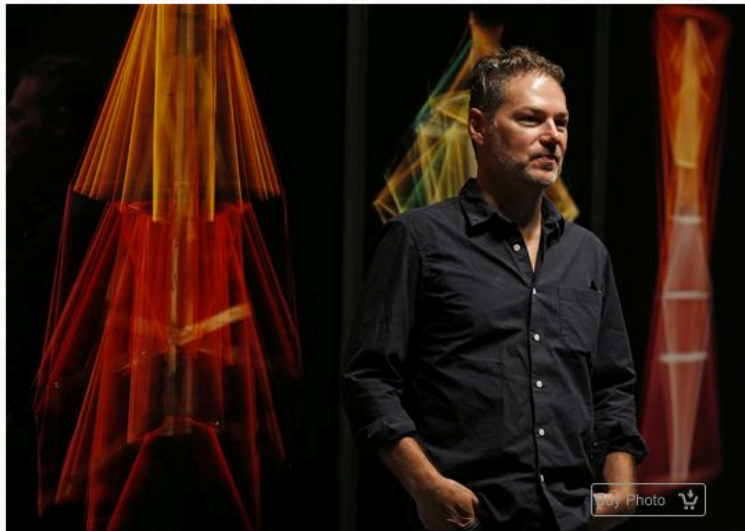
### **New, improved Metrobot back at CAC**

After an absence of more than five years, artist Nam June Paik's 26-foot-tall [Metrobot is back as Cincinnati's arts ambassador](#), standing watch at Sixth and Walnut streets.

The sculpture stood at the former site of the Contemporary Arts Center on Fifth Street for more than 20 years. The CAC moved in 2003, the sculpture's inner workings became outdated and it was sent to storage in 2009.

Albert Vontz III, son of the man who gave Metrobot to the CAC in 1988, along with the The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, helped pay for the refurbishment and move. The sculpture has been restored to an even better condition. It has an LED ticker and video screen, new neon, and a 10-cents-per-call pay phone in its leg. It should be able to withstand winds of more than 100 miles per hour.

Talk to Metrobot at Twitter, [@MetrobotCAC](#). - **Julie Engebrecht**



Kevin Moore, seen here with an installment at the Contemporary Arts Center, joined FotoFocus as artistic director and curator. (Photo: Enquirer file/Jeff Swinger)

### FotoFocus makes Cincinnati hub for photography

New York-based photography curator [Kevin Moore](#) joined the FotoFocus team as artistic director and curator shortly after the first month-long lens-based art festival in 2012, giving the 2014 version of the Cincinnati event a big shot of credibility.

FotoFocus Biennial 2014 featured five days of programming at Memorial Hall in October.

Moore brought in filmmaker [John Waters](#) and curated important exhibitions from contemporary photographers David Benjamin Sherry, the duo of Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs, and, posthumously, Vivian Maier. (The Onorato-Krebs exhibition is at the Contemporary Arts Center through Feb. 22.)

A highlight of the Memorial Hall programming was a lecture by curator in charge of the Department of Photographs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jeff L. Rosenheim, on the topic of photography and the Civil War.

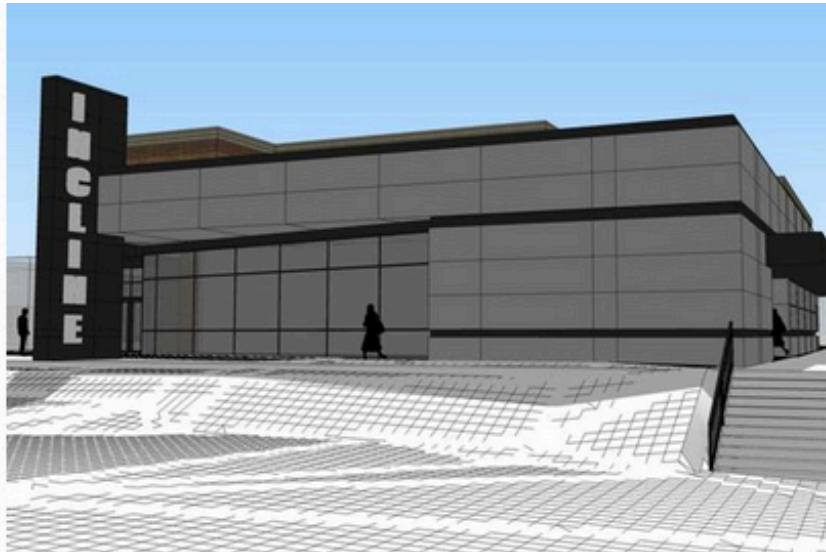
Moore is back for another two-year cycle. Expect to see some programming in 2015, in what would be the off year for FotoFocus.

Also notable on photography front is the work Cincinnati Art Museum associate curator of photography [Brian Sholis](#), on the job for just more than a year. Sholis has reached into the community to share his work and passion for lens-based art. You can see two of his exhibitions now, "Eyes on the Street" at the museum through Jan. 4 and "[Big Pictures](#)," on billboards through the region through May.

Sholis has just started a film series. Next up is the much-praised three-hour documentary "[National Gallery](#)" by Frederick Wiseman. You can see it in CAM's Fath Auditorium, beginning at 1 p.m., on Jan. 25. The event is free and open to the public. -

**Julie Engebrecht**





An artist's rendering of the Warsaw Federal Incline Theater (Photo: Provided)

### **New theater to grace Incline District**

The news hit like a bombshell. There would be a new, from-the-ground-up theater for live shows built in Cincinnati, the first since the Aronoff Center opened in 1995.

But it wouldn't be in the heart of downtown or in Over-the-Rhine, the places most of us turn for night-time entertainment activity.

Rather, the 220-seat Warsaw Federal Incline Theater would be part of a \$6 million performing arts center/parking complex perched on a hillside in the so-called Incline District, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of downtown. The theater was the brainchild of Tim Perrino, executive artistic director of Cincinnati Landmark Productions, which operates the Covedale Center for the Performing Arts and Cincinnati Young People's Theatre.

Construction began on Sept. 16, with an opening scheduled for June 3. The summer season will include "The Producers" (June 3-21), "1776" (July 8-26) and "9 to 5" (August 12-30). - David Lyman



Justin McCombs, Jeremy Dubin and Nick Rose in "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)." (Photo: Provided)

### Cincinnati Shakespeare completes the canon

It took 20 years, three names and several temporary homes. But in May, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company "completed the canon." That means that with the production of "The Two Noble Kinsmen," CSC had produced all 38 plays that are recognized as the work of William Shakespeare. A few were written with a collaborator. Others, like "Kinsmen," were decidedly lesser scripts, which is why we see them so seldom.

But the accomplishment was a prodigious one. It not only demonstrated CSC's unswerving commitment to Shakespeare's plays, but it also meant that the company had accomplished something that most fledgling theaters don't – it survived.

CSC is a wonderfully oddball of a theater, with a company of resident actors and technicians and a repertory that bobs back and forth between the Bard and modern classics. The theater's success is a testament to its devoted audience and to the vision of founding artistic director Jasson Minadakis and those who followed him, Nick Rose and current producing artistic director Brian Isaac Phillips. - **David Lyman**



A Cincinnati Ballet piece was part of Lumenocity. (Photo: The Enquirer/Carrie Cochran)

### Lumenocity dazzles record crowds

By sheer numbers alone, the biggest story in the arts was the second installment of Lumenocity in August. Who knew that the free tickets would all be gone within 12 seconds?

The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, which put on the show, reported that 42,500 people flocked to three performances and a dress rehearsal of the high-tech display of light projections using Music Hall as an ever-changing canvas. It dazzled, from the whimsical images inspired by late Cincinnati artist Charley Harper to the projections of live Cincinnati Ballet dancers. The designs, by Over-the-Rhine firm Brave Berlin, were choreographed to a 40-minute live performance by the Cincinnati Symphony.

About 50,000 TV households tuned in to the live simulcast on TV. Hundreds more watched from rooftops and streets surrounding Washington Park. Another 1,300 saw live feeds to Fountain Square and Riverbend. Online, more than 6,000 logged on to watch a live video stream from as far away as Russia and Sweden.

In 2013, officials were stunned when 35,000 people showed up over two nights. So they made big changes in 2014: Three nights of shows, Lumenocity Village with vendors and more food options in Washington Park and required free tickets for the viewing area. The lawn oval was fenced in, allowing 12,500 ticketed people per night. When the free ticket vouchers flew out of Ticketmaster in 12 seconds, some showed up for sale on eBay and City Council members cried foul. (Actually, it turned out, the free tickets could not be sold.) In the end, more were made available, and there were simulcasts on TV, radio and on big screens at Fountain Square and Riverbend Music Center.

Will it return? It's a huge undertaking, but "if the funds can be raised, Lumenocity will return," says CSO spokesman Chris Pinelo. - **Janelle Gelfand**



The May Festival Chorus and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, shown here at Music Hall, traveled to Carnegie Hall for the Spring for Music Festival in May. (Photo: Enquirer file)

### Cincy in NYC: Arts groups strut their stuff

For a week in May, Cincinnati's arts, culture and cuisine paraded before discriminating audiences and critics in some of New York's finest venues. Thousands of Cincinnatians were in the Big Apple for "Cincy in NYC." Politicians, city boosters, entrepreneurs and movers and shakers went along to tout our region as a great place to live, work and play.

It was an unprecedented display. Cincinnati Ballet capped its 50th anniversary season with a performance of rock icon Peter Frampton's "Hummingbird in a Box" during a weeklong residency at the Joyce – with a jubilant Frampton introducing his work on opening night.

James Conlon led the Cincinnati Symphony and May Festival Chorus in an historic performance and live broadcast of Nathaniel Dett's rare oratorio "The Ordering of Moses" at Carnegie Hall in the "Spring for Music" Festival. The CCM Jazz Ensemble rocked Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola at Lincoln Center and the Ariel Quartet played Berg and Beethoven in SubCulture, a funky space that was part-bar, part-theater in Greenwich Village.

The week included a sneak peak at Cincinnati Opera's upcoming world premiere, "Morning Star," and the reading of "Fool," a new play by Cincinnati native Theresa Rebeck. Art lovers viewed the Taft Museum of Art's "Portrait of a Man Rising from a Chair" (1633) by Rembrandt on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A taste of Cincinnati took center stage at the world-renowned James Beard House, with dinner prepared by seven Cincinnati chefs.

Will there be an encore? Cincinnati Ballet board member Julie Shifman, whose initial epiphany became "Cincy in NYC," doesn't yet know. But, she says, the business and convention impact has been great.

"It helped to cement the ability of our arts groups to work together, which is unique to our city. I know that will be a benefit with future collaborative efforts in Cincinnati," she says. - **Janelle Gelfand**





Principal dancers Janessa Touchet and Cervilio Miguel Amador starred in "King Arthur's Camelot." (Photo: Enquirer file/Leigh Taylor)

### **Cincinnati Ballet celebrates 50 years in style**

"Ambitious" hardly began to describe the agenda that Cincinnati Ballet set for itself during its 50th anniversary season (2013-14). The company performed in New York City for a week, its first visit there in nearly three decades. It published a hard cover, 203-page book chronicling its history. Most spectacular of all, though, was the world premiere of "King Arthur's Camelot," a full-length ballet with choreography by CEO/artistic director Victoria Morgan and a commissioned score by John Estacio.

Less headline-grabbing, but every bit as important to the long-term health of the company was that it added Balanchine's "Symphony in C" to its repertory, boosted its endowment and created a fund to underwrite world premiere ballets.

In an era where the number of professional ballet companies seems to shrink every year, Cincinnati Ballet has not only survived, but it has also grown at the same time that it has become more financially stable.

"It's not a question of doing things quickly," says philanthropist and business leader Otto M. Budig Jr., an emeritus trustee of the ballet. "It's a question of getting things done right. And I think Cincinnati Ballet is doing it right. And as such I believe they'll continue for a long time." - **David Lyman**





Music Hall(Photo: The Enquirer/Meg Vogel)

### A tale of two cultural icons

A big question looming over arts groups this year was how to pay for major renovations of two of Cincinnati's most important cultural – but crumbling – landmarks.

Music Hall, the region's premiere performance space with a 3,417-seat theater, hasn't had an update in more than 40 years. The 136-year-old building needs updating of basic mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems and foundation up-shoring, more restrooms and better seating.

Just up the street, Union Terminal – housing Cincinnati Museum Center's Duke Energy Children's Museum, Museum of National History and Science, Robert D. Lindner Family OMNIMAX Theater and the Cincinnati History Library and Archives – shows deterioration from decades of structural and water damage. It needs extensive repairs and restoration – both inside and outside – and, like Music Hall, major system upgrades.

A banner task force of business and cultural leaders led by former Procter & Gamble CEO Bob McDonald spent seven months studying the historic buildings and hammering out a plan to save them. In June, the group concluded that more than \$330 million was needed to transform them into cultural showpieces (\$123 million for Music Hall and \$208 million for Union Terminal). Two-thirds would come from a proposed quarter-cent sales-tax increase lasting about a decade, with private money and tax credits providing the rest.

But with the specter of the stadium tax hanging over their heads, Hamilton County commissioners dumped Music Hall from the deal at the eleventh hour. In November, voters passed the levy, now a five-year sales tax benefiting only Union Terminal. Work begins soon.

Then, on Dec. 18, Music Hall received a welcome gift from the state when it won a new \$25 million, one-time award through the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit program. Supporters are cheering, now that \$100 million of the \$123.5 million they need has been raised.

And for the first time in more than a year, the Music Hall project has a timeline. Construction could begin as early as September. Music Hall's resident companies – the Cincinnati Symphony and Pops, May Festival, Cincinnati Opera and, when it reopens, Cincinnati Ballet – will vacate in spring of 2016, and return to a revitalized landmark in fall of 2017. - **Janelle Gelfand**