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THEATER & ARTS ENTERTAINMENT

# What's new? Musicals, theater expansion, arts leaders and more

By **MATTHEW J. PALM**  
ORLANDO SENTINEL ARTS WRITER | JUL 21, 2021



FEEDBACK



Virginia Roebuck and John Andrew will be bringing the Whitney Houston-Kevin Costner film "The Bodyguard" to the stage at the Garden Theatre for five additional performances. (Steven Miller Photography / Courtesy photo)

A “Bodyguard” extension, a new leader at the Orlando Philharmonic, a theater’s big expansion and more are in the news this month. Here’s a quick look at what’s happening on the Central Florida arts scene.



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‘Bodyguard’: A ‘romantic thriller’ without romance, thrills | Review

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**‘BODYGUARD’ EXTENSION:**

Whitney Houston fans have five additional chances to catch “The Bodyguard” at the Garden Theatre in Winter Garden. The musical, which features dynamic performances of Houston’s greatest hits, will now run through Aug. 8. While theatergoers may be less than impressed with the story line (like I was), stars Virginia Roebuck and Lillie Eliza Thomas deliver powerful vocals on songs such as “One Moment in Time,” “Run To You,” “Saving All My Love For You”

and, of course, “I Will Always Love You.” Tickets start at \$25; [gardentheatre.org](http://gardentheatre.org).

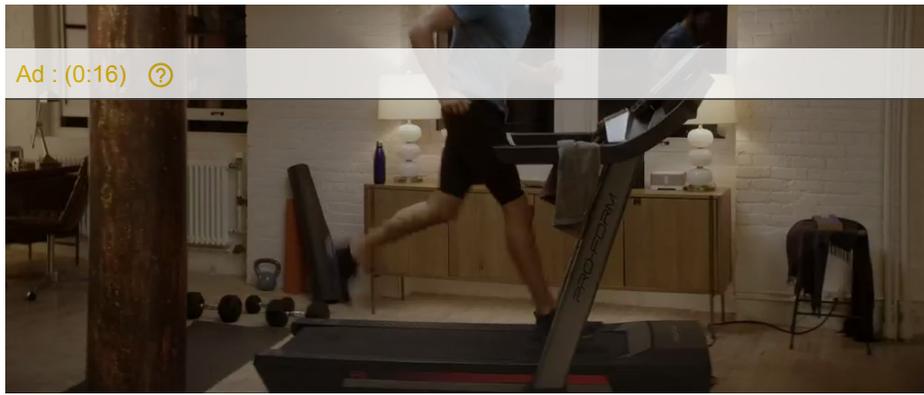
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**NEW ARTS LEADER:** Melody Lynch officially became president of the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra board of directors on July 1. A shareholder at Lowndes, Drosdick, Kantor and Reed, P.A., Lynch succeeds Mary Palmer in the position and will serve for two years.

Lynch has been on the board since February 2015 and chaired the search committee that resulted in hiring Paul Helfrich as the orchestra's executive director. She's an alumna of Lake Highland Preparatory School and has a background in professional dance. Her other volunteer work includes serving as a pro bono attorney with the Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association and Seniors First.

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Additional Philharmonic board appointments include: vice president and president-elect Priscilla Azzolini, partner and director of communications at Different Perspective advertising agency; secretary Lawrence Kellogg, founder at LKLSG law firm; and treasurer Michelle Napier, chief revenue officer at Orlando Health.



Melody Lynch, a shareholder at Lowndes, Drosdick, Kantor and Reed, P.A., is the new president of the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. (Orlando Philharmonic / Courtesy photo)

**NEW MUSICALS PART 1:** Winter Park Playhouse reports that attendance grew at its annual Florida Festival of New Musicals, which ran June 24-27. The fourth fest shone a spotlight on six previously unproduced musicals from around the country.

“The week left all of us thrilled on so many levels,” said Scott Anderson, writer of “The Golden Door.” “We loved to see the work come to life, we loved to see how the performers inhabited characters in ways better than how we envisioned them, we loved the opportunity to get

professional feedback ... we were buzzing with artistic possibilities for next steps.”

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Submissions for the fifth Florida Festival of New Musicals, planned for June 23-26, 2022, are now being accepted through Sept. 30. For details, click on the “New Musical Festival” tab at [winterparkplayhouse.org](http://winterparkplayhouse.org).



The cast of "The Golden Door" -- Nyeshia Smith (from left), Chase Williams, Cameron Silverman, Johnathan Lee Iverson, Laurel Hatfield, Dustin Cunningham, Cesar De La Rosa, Janine Papin, Anastasia Remoundos, Caila Carter, Wesley Slade and Leigh Green -- is pictured at Winter Park Playhouse's Florida Festival of New Musicals. (Winter Park Playhouse / Courtesy photo)

**NEW MUSICALS PART 2:** Florida Theatrical Association has announced the two winners of its sixth annual New Musical Discovery Series.

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More than 50 aspiring playwrights from around the country submitted new works that were reviewed by a panel of theater professionals. The two winning entries, which will receive staged readings featuring local directors and performers, are:

- Triple Threats, by Nehemiah Lockett & Tracey Conyer Lee: In 1981, a

SECTIONS

criminal sets him on a new path — toward a big Broadway musical called “Love Thief.”

- AM, by Piper Loomis and Jennifer Loomis: In 1966, two lovestruck kids and a more mature couple step into the world of AM radio, with its fads, ads, contests and music as their stories twist closer together.



Florida Theatrical Association's New Musical Discovery Series began in 2016. (Florida Theatrical Association / Courtesy photo)

Florida Theatrical Association presents touring Broadway shows in several cities and works to develop theater audiences through scholarships and other programs, such as the New Musical Discovery Series — now in its sixth year. For more information, go to [FloridaTheatrical.org](http://FloridaTheatrical.org).

**LIVING DRAMA THEATER UPDATE:** A few months ago, I wrote how the Living Drama Theater in Eustis was trying to raise enough money to save its venue. Although ticket sales disappeared during the COVID-19 shutdown, the theater's rent did not. Owner Michelle Duarte reports there's still a ways to go in finding enough funding to keep the space; the community theater remains about \$35,000 short.

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Regular readers may recall that Duarte faces a deadline of her own: She's terminally ill. The fundraiser continues; get more information at [livingdramatheatre.com](http://livingdramatheatre.com).



The Living Drama Theatre in Eustis still needs funds to save its space. (Stephen M. Dowell/Orlando Sentinel)

**THEATER EXPANSION:** Big news from a theater just an hour away from Orlando. The Titusville Playhouse has acquired land with plans to add a second venue near its Emma Parrish Theatre. The new venue will be open-air and is part of a bigger vision that call for the eventual establishment of a 450-seat theater, nearly twice as large as the Emma Parrish.

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Plans call for the Playhouse to program comedy shows, cabarets, concerts and educational and community events, in addition to theater. The acquisition of the new property, roughly kitty-corner from the current theater, increases the Playhouse’s footprint in Titusville to more than 2.5 acres.



This image, provided by Titusville Playhouse, shows where the theater currently is located (outlined in purple) and where the expansion will take place (outlined in blue). (Titusville Playhouse / Courtesy photo)

“We are very enthusiastic about working in partnership with the city to develop a thriving entertainment district in what has been a fairly sleepy and underdeveloped portion of the Titusville Community Redevelopment Area,” said executive artistic director Steven Heron in the announcement. “Working together, we can provide the momentum to establish a designated entertainment district that will draw visitors from throughout the entire Central Florida region and beyond.

*Find me on Twitter @matt\_on\_arts or email me at [mpalm@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:mpalm@orlandosentinel.com). Want more theater and arts news and*

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