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**Contact:**

Ellen McDonald, Publicist

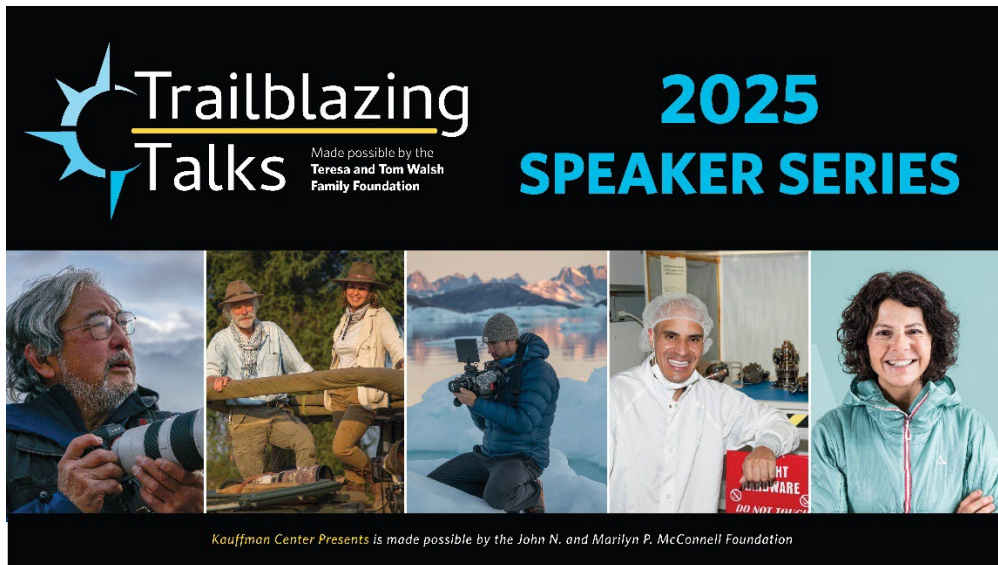
Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

816.213.4355 | [publicity@kauffmancenter.org](mailto:publicity@kauffmancenter.org)

Karen Badgett, Director of Marketing & Community Engagement

Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

816.994.7229 | [kbadgett@kauffmancenter.org](mailto:kbadgett@kauffmancenter.org)



**KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
ANNOUNCES 2025 SPEAKER SERIES:  
TRAILBLAZING TALKS**

**The lineup includes photographers, mountaineers, scientists and more.  
5-Show subscriptions go on sale Monday, May 20, 2024.**

Kansas City, MO – Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts announces the 2025 **Trailblazing Talks** speaker series, which is made possible by the Teresa and Tom Walsh Family Foundation. The series features five presenters, including nature and science photographers, a mountaineer, a NASA engineer and others.

- **Michael Yamashita, Photographer: East Meets West: In the Footsteps of Marco Polo**, Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025, 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre
- **Dereck Joubert, Filmmaker and Beverly Joubert, Filmmaker: Wild Africa: On the Brink**, Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025, 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre
- **Keith Ladzinski, Photographer: Forces of Nature**, Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre
- **Kobie Boykins, NASA Engineer: Beyond Earth: The Quest for Life**, Tuesday, April 8, 2025, 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre
- **Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, Climber: Defying Limits: Climbing the 14 Highest Peaks**, Tuesday, May 20, 2025, 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre

Each one-hour event is illustrated by stunning imagery and gripping video footage shown on the Kauffman Center's 40-foot-by-22.5-foot screen in Muriel Kauffman Theatre. A brief audience Q&A session follows each presentation.

**Trailblazing Talks** connects Kansas Citians to a deep roster of talented speakers including renowned photographers, adventurers, authors, scientists and filmmakers, who transport audiences into the depths of their careers. Presenters share first-hand accounts of their daring journeys, sharing insights about the world around us, helping us to move forward thoughtfully, striving to solve big problems, bridging the distances between us and lifting us up – one story at a time.

The lineup for the 2025 series includes wide-ranging topics presented live on stage. From people on the front lines, you'll follow the footsteps of Marco Polo, learn about the interdependence of wild animals and wild places, see extreme moments captured from around the globe, learn whether there is water and life on other planets and hear gripping stories of the world's highest peaks.

"This is our second year of Trailblazing Talks, and we've had an excellent response from our audiences. Many presentations last year were sold out and those in attendance were thrilled to immerse themselves in the trailblazers' stories. What a wonderful opportunity to travel the world without leaving your seat! This series is a welcome addition to the diverse array of programming and offers a chance to be a part of an unforgettable experience which promises to enrich, inspire and expand your own world," said President and CEO Paul Schofer.

The Kauffman Center has curated speakers specifically from the Changemaker Speaker Series.

## **HOW TO PURCHASE SEASON TICKETS**

**Trailblazing Talks** series subscription packages offer priority seating and as much as 30% savings from individual ticket prices. Five-show season subscription packages will be available to purchase starting at 10 a.m. Monday, May 20, 2024. Pricing for the five-show package ranges from \$145 to \$235 and includes applicable fees. Single tickets for all five events go on sale later this fall.

Subscriptions are available through the Kauffman Center Ticket Office at 816.994.7222 or online at [kauffmancenter.org/subscriptions](https://kauffmancenter.org/subscriptions).

## **2025 TRAILBLAZING TALKS**

*Made possible by the Teresa and Tom Walsh Family Foundation*

**Michael Yamashita, Photographer**

**East Meets West: In the Footsteps of Marco Polo**

**Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre**

Join National Geographic photographer and Sony Ambassador, Michael Yamashita as he follows in the footsteps of Marco Polo, the greatest Western explorer of all time. Relive his 13<sup>th</sup> Century odyssey along the Silk Road, from Italy through Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, all the way to China, and his epic voyage back across the South China Sea with stops in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. Marco Polo gave the west a vibrant window into Asian culture, art, religion and landscapes, accurately describing the people and places he encountered. 700 years later, we celebrate the man who inspired a bold new age of exploration and discovery.

**Dereck Joubert, Filmmaker, and Beverly Joubert, Filmmaker**

**Wild Africa: On the Brink**

**Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre**

Hailing from South Africa, Beverly Joubert and her partner in work and life Dereck Joubert, both world-class filmmakers, have been documenting wild Africa for more than three decades, shining light on Africa's big cats, elephants and rhinos. On stage, through jaw-dropping videos and images, they show the interdependence of wildlife and wild places, and the many clever and groundbreaking ways they have stepped in to make a difference, whether by partnering with local communities to find a sustainable path to coexistence or doing what's never been done before.

**Keith Ladzinski, Photographer**

**Forces of Nature**

**Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre**

Whether dangling from ropes thousands of feet up to document first ascents in interior Antarctica, storm chasing in Tornado Alley, trekking up Mount Everest, scaling ancient giant Redwoods or diving with wild alligators in the Florida Everglades, Keith Ladzinski goes to the extreme to capture the moment and share it with us. Celebrated as one of the nimblest nature, art and commercial storytellers working today, Ladzinski brings unparalleled nuance, sensitivity and depth to his storytelling. Journey to the farthest reaches of our planet in this sweeping look at nature and man.

**Kobie Boykins, NASA Engineer**

**Beyond Earth: The Quest for Life**

**Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre**

Embark on a journey through more than two decades of space exploration with leading NASA Engineer Kobie Boykins. After working on each of the Mars Rover programs, Boykins has set his sights on more distant frontiers with his most ambitious mission to date – a circumnavigation of Europa, Jupiter's icy moon. As chief engineer of this project, Boykins has been leading a team of thousands to build and deploy a spacecraft that will take eight years just to reach its target, before it slingshots around Jupiter and gets into a two-year orbit of Europa. The goal? To find out if there is water under the icy crust. Where there's water, there's life. The mission is set to launch in October 2024.

**Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, Climber**  
**Defying Limits: Climbing the 14 Highest Peaks**  
**Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. in Muriel Kauffman Theatre**

At 23, Austrian mountaineer Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner achieved her greatest dream: climbing an 8,000-meter peak. Fast forward to today, Kaltenbrunner has climbed all 14 of the seminal 8,000+ meter peaks without supplemental oxygen and without the help of high-altitude porters, the first woman to do so. She completed the quest on her 7<sup>th</sup> attempt up what many consider to be the most daunting climb in the world, the world's second highest peak, K2, known worldwide as the "Savage Mountain," in the remote Karakoram Range of Pakistan and China. On stage, she shares her inspiration for climbing and gripping stories of her multi-year quest to become the first.

## **BECOME A TRAILBLAZER**

Members of the Trailblazers group are invited to pre-show receptions and Q&As with the awe-inspiring Trailblazing Talks speakers. Memberships are fully tax-deductible and help support bringing Trailblazing Talks events to the Kauffman Center. Join today at [kauffmancenter.org/trailblazers](https://kauffmancenter.org/trailblazers) or when you purchase a Trailblazing Talks subscription.

### **The \$650 all-access level:**

- Invitation for your household to **all five** pre-show receptions and Q&As with each of the Trailblazing Talks presenters prior to the evening's presentation. Receptions are from 6 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and include complimentary appetizers and drinks. The Q&A with each presenter runs from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- First access to renew or upgrade Trailblazing Talks seats for the following season's series.
- Presale access to Kauffman Center Presents performances.
- Invitations for two to attend the Kauffman Center's members-only concerts and receptions twice a year.

### **The \$200 level:**

- Invitation for your household to **one** pre-show reception and Q&A with one of the series presenters prior to the evening's presentation. Receptions are from 6 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and include complimentary appetizers and drinks. The Q&A with each presenter runs from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- First access to renew or upgrade Trailblazing Talks seats for the following season's series.
- Presale access to Kauffman Center Presents performances.
- Invitations for two to attend the Kauffman Center's members-only concerts and receptions twice a year.

## **STUDENT MATINEE SCHEDULE**

As part of the Kauffman Center's community engagement offerings, **Trailblazing Talks** will present four student matinee performances in 2025:

- Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.: Michael Yamashita, Photographer – East Meets West: In the Footsteps of Marco Polo

- Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.: Dereck Joubert, Filmmaker, and Beverly Joubert, Filmmaker – Wild Africa: On the Brink
- Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.: Keith Ladzinski, Photographer – Forces of Nature
- Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.: Kobie Boykins, NASA Engineer – Beyond Earth: The Quest for Life

Educators can find more information and request tickets to the matinees in late August 2024 at [kauffmancenter.org/schoolmatinees](https://kauffmancenter.org/schoolmatinees).

## **PARKING & DOWNTOWN MAPS**

Find information and maps for Kauffman Center parking and street closure updates at [kauffmancenter.org/parking](https://kauffmancenter.org/parking). The Arts District Garage is the primary parking garage for patrons. The garage is directly attached to the Kauffman Center just south of the building with multiple access points to surrounding streets. Purchasing event parking in advance is highly recommended as it often will sell out. The garage is \$13 per car in advance or \$16 upon arrival or valet is \$22 in advance or \$24 upon arrival.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

The Kauffman Center’s promise to bring artists and audiences together is reflected in many ways, including removing barriers and providing access to our performing arts experiences for all patrons. You can learn more by visiting [kauffmancenter.org/accessibility](https://kauffmancenter.org/accessibility). To request services or receive additional information that would make your visit more enjoyable, please contact our ticket office at 816.994.7222 or [contact@kauffmancenter.org](mailto:contact@kauffmancenter.org).

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Receive updates by following our Facebook page at [facebook.com/kauffmancenter](https://facebook.com/kauffmancenter), Instagram page at [instagram.com/kauffmancenter](https://instagram.com/kauffmancenter) and Twitter page at [twitter.com/kauffmancenter](https://twitter.com/kauffmancenter). Watch videos at [youtube.com/kauffmancenter](https://youtube.com/kauffmancenter) and follow our blog at [kauffmancenter.org/news](https://kauffmancenter.org/news).

## **MEDIA**

Visit the Kauffman Center’s online press room for media resources, multimedia library, press release archive and more: [kauffmancenter.org/about/press-room](https://kauffmancenter.org/about/press-room).

## **SPONSORS**

The 2025 Trailblazing Talks speaker series is made possible by the Teresa and Tom Walsh Family Foundation. *Kauffman Center Presents* is made possible by the John N. and Marilyn P. McConnell Foundation, Premier Partner Saint Luke’s Health System and Building Sponsor Aristocrat Motors and Mercedes-Benz of Kansas City.

## **ABOUT KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**

The Kauffman Center serves as a cultural cornerstone for extraordinary and diverse music, opera, theater and dance performances for Kansas City and the region.

Designed by internationally recognized architect Moshe Safdie, the Kauffman Center has been honored as one of the World's 15 Most Beautiful Concert Halls, which attracts some of the most renowned performers and entertainers. The 285,000-square-foot building includes two performance halls: the 1,800-seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre that hosts dance performances, operas, plays and Broadway tours and the 1,600-seat Helzberg Hall, a venue for a wide range of musical performances, from chamber music to full orchestral concerts, jazz and pop, lectures and recitals.

The Kauffman Center is the performance home for three of the region's leading performing arts organizations – Kansas City Ballet, Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Kansas City Symphony. In addition, *Kauffman Center Presents* brings in performing artists at the top of their classes as well as Trailblazing Talks, a live speaker series that curates exceptional photographers, scientists and filmmakers.

Since opening, the Kauffman Center has offered over 3,100 performances and welcomed more than 4.5 million visitors.

The Kauffman Center is deeply committed to enriching the community through access to arts experiences and engagement initiatives. Since 2011, more than 450,000 students have attended school matinees at the Kauffman Center with several schools utilizing the Transportation Fund which helps to defray or eliminate the cost of bus transportation. The Community Tickets program provides free public performance tickets to underserved audiences and discounts for students, educators, seniors, veterans and military service members. The annual Future Stages Festival invites more than 650 young artists to perform on the Kauffman Center stages. Visitors of all ages enjoy free access to a wide range of performing arts experiences and interactive arts activities at the festival. Each year, the Kauffman Center also offers various educational programs including internships, educational tours, Career Center Stage and Backstage Intensives.

More information about the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts can be found at [kauffmancenter.org](http://kauffmancenter.org).