

A very fitting celebration

We all have had “those” moments. The ones that change us forever.

One of mine was the field trip my fourth-grade class took to the just-opened Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in 1969. Sitting in the Foellinger Great Hall, we watched and listened to what, for me, was an amazing—and mesmerizing—classical music performance. That genre of music wasn’t heard in my home. Although taught in my elementary school music class, it was something I had never fully experienced—until that day.

I left the Foellinger Great Hall a different child.

Krannert Center helped define who I was then and who I am now—someone who likens the arts to oxygen. Absolutely essential.

Over the years, I have experienced the offerings of Krannert Center as often as I can. I have taken in—and been taken by—many performances at the Center, including seeing my brother **Jay, ’73 LAS, DDS ’79 UIC**, perform the role of Laurie Laurence in Theatre Professor Roman Tymchyschyn’s production of *Little Women*. This past year alone, I was swept away by violinist Joshua Bell, the world-renowned guitarists who participated in the 7th annual ELLNORA|Guitar Festival and the Illinois Theatre’s student production of Stephen Sondheim’s *Assassins*.

But that’s just my sampling of performances. Others have seen a Who’s Who of outstanding artists perform at Krannert Center, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lang Lang, Chick

Corea, Sonny Rollins, Yo-Yo Ma, Herbie Hancock, Luciano Pavarotti, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Russian National Ballet and the London Symphony Orchestra.

As our cover story proclaims, Krannert Center is celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years. The Center redefined Urbana-Champaign’s cultural landscape. More importantly, it established itself as the nation’s only true teaching arts center, and elevated the academic experience for our students not just in access, but in the quality of instruction.

Mike Ross, the visionary leader and director of Krannert Center for more than 20 years, has put together (along with his team) a noteworthy and very special roster of events for this golden year.

So, yes, I am marking my calendar for many celebratory performances and activities in honor of this special anniversary, including April 12-14, 2019, when it will host its “Come Home to Krannert Center” weekend. I am thrilled to be celebrating 50 years of awe-inspiring musical, theatrical and dance performances. I strongly invite you to mark your calendars, come back to town, and take in some of the spectacular performances Mike and his amazing team have planned for this academic year.

Who knows? You might have one of “those” moments yourself.



Jennifer Lewis Neubauer, ’82 ED
Associate Vice Chancellor, Alumni Relations, UI
President, U of I Alumni Alliance



Courtesy of Jennifer Neubauer

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