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**KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
ANNOUNCES NEW 2024 SPEAKER SERIES:  
TRAILBLAZING TALKS**

**Lineup includes photographers, nature enthusiasts, scientists and more.  
*Series subscriptions go on sale Monday, May 22, 2023.***

Kansas City, MO – Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts announces a new inspiring and exciting speaker series – **Trailblazing Talks** – which is made possible by the Teresa and Tom Walsh Family Foundation. Beginning in 2024, the new series features five presenters, including an oceanographer, sports photographer, paleoanthropologist and others.

Each event is illustrated by stunning imagery and gripping video footage shown on the Kauffman Center’s 22.5’ x 40’ 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 that includes renowned photographers, adventurers, authors, scientists and filmmakers. Presenters share insights about the world around us, helping us to move forward thoughtfully, strive to solve big problems, bridge the distances between us and lift us up – one story at a time.

“In this new series, you can count on close encounters with high-caliber adventurers and photojournalists like those you have experienced in the National Geographic Live series. In addition, our new partnership allows us to incorporate some variations that we believe this audience and our community will find to be engaging, exciting, innovative and, in many ways, ‘trailblazing’,” said President and CEO Paul Schofer.

The lineup for the new series includes wide-ranging topics presented live on stage. From people on the front lines, you’ll learn how Neanderthals failed (and why we need to know), explore America’s favorite game (and women’s roles in baseball) and discover steps that can be taken to address the survival of our stressed oceans.

The Kauffman Center has curated speakers specifically for Kansas City from the Changemaker Speaker Series. Changemaker provides top experts from a variety of creative, STEM and entrepreneurial fields who are dynamic storytellers that share their bold ideas and fresh perspectives to spark creativity, foster community and inspire action.

## **HOW TO PURCHASE SEASON TICKETS**

**Trailblazing Talks** series subscription packages offer priority seating and as much as 30% savings from individual ticket prices. Four-show season subscription packages and a special engagement add-on will be available to purchase starting at 10 a.m. Monday, May 22, 2023. Pricing for the four-show package ranges from \$96 to \$172 plus applicable fees. Single tickets for all five events go on sale later this summer.

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

## **2024 TRAILBLAZING TALKS**

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

**Ella Al-Shamahi, Paleoanthropologist**  
**2% Neanderthal: Redrawing Our Family Tree**  
**January 9, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.**

Evolutionary Biologist Ella Al-Shamahi may be the most unconventional paleoanthropologist working today. These days she wears three hats: leading expeditions into unstable and hostile territories to un-earth fossil records before they are wiped from the planet; as a TV Host guiding our journey around the planet to understand how it's changing; and hitting open mic nights at stand-up festivals worldwide to keep from going mad from all of it. To chart a more sustainable future for ourselves, Al-Shamahi believes we need to understand why our recent ancestors failed.

**Michael Davie, Journalist**

**Documenting the Red Zone**

**February 20, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.**

Join award-winning documentary filmmaker Michael Davie as he takes you on a journey through stories of faith, resilience and courage. With nearly 30 years of experience working in war zones, refugee camps and hostile territories, Davie has learned to let go of fear and embrace uncertainty to capture the most memorable moments. Witness the power of the human spirit in the most surprising places — inside a South African prison, on a mountainside in Rwanda where brave park rangers risk everything to guard threatened mountain gorillas and on the banks of the Ganges river, to name a few.

***Special Engagement***

**Jean Fruth, Sports Photographer**

**From Sandlots to Stadiums: Inside America's Favorite Pastime**

**March 12, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.**

Rather than a seat at the table, she'll take one down the third baseline. With this bold approach, sports photographer Jean Fruth has carved a unique niche in the world of sports journalism. As one of the few women to break through to cover the Majors, she has brought a fresh perspective to America's favorite game. Fruth's passion for baseball is infectious, from the storied ballparks of the U.S. to grassroots leagues across Route 66 and beyond. Beyond simply covering the game, Fruth's work has also focused on how women have made their mark in baseball. From the diamond to the owner's box, she documents the inspiring stories of women who have broken barriers and shattered stereotypes in the sport. Drawing on her extensive interviews with baseball legends, the all-women league that inspired the film *A League of Their Own*, and the trailblazers who are energizing the game today, she paints a vivid picture of the sport's rich history and exciting future.

**David McLain, Photographer**

**The Blue Zones: Unlocking the Secrets of Longevity**

**April 23, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.**

Discover the secrets of the Blue Zones, where people around the planet regularly live vibrant and healthy lives beyond 100 years old. Photographer David McLain has spent

15 years working alongside author Dan Buettner to study the habits and rituals of centenarians in these five geographic locations: Loma Linda, California; the Nicoya peninsula of Costa Rica; Sardinia, Italy; Ikaria, Greece and Okinawa, Japan. Through personal anecdotes and scientific research, McLain shares how adopting practices they share — oceans apart — can add eight to 10 quality years to our own lives. Join us on this journey toward a long, well-lived life.

**Sylvia Earle, Oceanographer**

**Saving Our Blue Planet, One Hope Spot at a Time**

**May 21, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.**

With more than 7,500 hours logged underwater and the wisdom that comes from working in just about every facet of ocean conservation — from assuming the helm as the first female Chief Scientist of NOAA to designing and engineering deep water rovers — Dr. Sylvia Earle’s wish to save the ocean is gaining traction, one “Hope Spot” at a time. Working beyond borders and ideologies, this early TED Prize winner advises heads of state on critical marine protection legislation and crisis response. She strives to help the rest of us understand the consequences of everything we put into — and take out of — the ocean. Most importantly, she believes that although humans are largely responsible for many stresses on the ocean, we also are its best hope for survival.

**STUDENT MATINEE SCHEDULE**

As part of the Kauffman Center’s Open Doors program, **Trailblazing Talks** will present three student matinee performances in 2024:

- January 9, 2024, at 10:30 a.m.: Ella Al-Shamahi – 2% Neanderthal: Redrawing our Family Tree
- February 20, 2024, at 10:30 a.m.: Michael Davie – Documenting the Red Zone
- May 21, 2024, at 10:30 a.m.: Sylvia Earle – Saving Our Blue Planet, One Hope Spot at a Time

Educators can find more information and request tickets to the matinees starting May 22, 2023 at [kauffmancenter.org/schoolmatinees](https://kauffmancenter.org/schoolmatinees).

**Trailblazing Talks** school matinees are supported by the Marlese and Robert Gourley Children’s Fund, the Teresa and Tom Walsh Family Foundation, the John N. and Marilyn P. McConnell Foundation and PNC Bank, the Community Tickets sponsor.

Schools that attend a student matinee at the Kauffman Center can apply for bus assistance through the Open Doors Transportation Fund, presented by Evergy. Learn more at [kauffmancenter.org/transportation](https://kauffmancenter.org/transportation).

## **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 the garage can sell out. The garage is \$13 per car in advance (\$16 at the gate). 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 2024 **Trailblazing Talks** series is made possible by the Teresa and Tom Walsh Family Foundation. The *Kauffman Center Presents* series 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 THE KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts – a major not-for-profit center for music, opera, theater, and dance designed by Moshe Safdie – opened in 2011. Serving as a cultural cornerstone for Kansas City and the region, the Kauffman Center delivers

extraordinary and diverse performing arts experiences for everyone. Honored as one of the World's 15 Most Beautiful Concert Halls, the Kauffman Center attracts some of the world's most renowned performers and entertainers.

Through educational outreach programs and community enrichment, the Kauffman Center supports Kansas City as a cultural destination. More information on the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts is available at [kauffmancenter.org](http://kauffmancenter.org).