

APRIL 3-8
2025



CHARLOTTE
IDEAS
FESTIVAL

presented by



THE CHARLOTTE CENTER



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE

Welcome to the 2025 Charlotte Ideas Festival – where people and ideas meet!

Big ideas, bold conversations, and a whole lot of inspiration—that’s what the Charlotte Ideas Festival is all about! This year’s theme, Timelines, takes us on a journey through the past, present, and future with thought-provoking talks, performances, and panel discussions.

But this festival isn’t just about listening—it’s about connecting.

It’s a chance to gather with curious, open-minded people who love big ideas as much as you do. In a world that often feels divided, spaces like this—where conversation sparks new possibilities—matter more than ever. So whether you’re coming to learn, get inspired, or just have some really great conversations, we’d love to see you there. Grab your tickets today at thecharlottecenter.org and be part of something amazing!

The Charlotte Ideas Festival, now in its fourth year, is a festival within a festival. Part of Charlotte SHOUT!, the Charlotte Ideas Festival brings leading thinkers to Charlotte and local thought leaders to the world.

The Charlotte Ideas Festival is presented by The Charlotte Center for the Humanities and Civic Imagination. The Charlotte Center is a community forum and civic action catalyst that invites people into meaningful connection and problem-solving informed by deep consideration of the human experience.

At the core of The Charlotte Center is a deep regard for the humanities: those disciplines that offer a treasure trove of insight and wisdom. The humanities – philosophy, history, literature, language, the arts – invite us to our better selves. They offer a critical and constructive spirit that calls us to what is good and true.

A special thank you to everyone who has helped make the Charlotte Ideas Festival possible! We can’t wait to meet you!



Mark Peres
The Charlotte Center
Founder & Executive Director



Meg Seitz
The Charlotte Center
Board Chair





Kick off the 2025 Charlotte Ideas Festival with Chief AI Officer Noelle Russell!

Join us as we launch Charlotte SHOUT! with an unforgettable evening celebrating the festival's four vibrant pillars: Food, Music, Arts, and Ideas. This kickoff at the newly restored Carolina Theatre will set the stage for three weeks of creativity, culture, and community.

The evening will culminate with the official launch of the Charlotte Ideas Festival, featuring an enlightening and timely keynote presentation by AI leader Noelle Russell on the crucial intersection of innovation and ethics.

Noelle Russell is a multi-award-winning technologist who specializes in helping companies with Cloud, Data and AI transformation. She has led teams at NPR, Microsoft, IBM, Accenture, AWS and Amazon Alexa, and is a consistent champion for AI literacy.

Event Ticket: \$40

Boris "Bluz" Rogers is an Emmy Award-winning poet, author, and creative strategist known for his powerful storytelling and commitment to community engagement.

Sainted Trap Choir, a Charlotte-based group founded by DJ Fannie Mae and Dennis Reed, blends gospel, R&B, hip-hop, and trap music, aiming to celebrate Southern church culture through music, fashion, and art.

Will White is a multifaceted artist based in Charlotte, North Carolina, specializing in fashion design and fashion illustration. Will was a semifinalist for Season 17 of Project Runway.

I share the wonders of the cosmos through sound

Join us for a mind-expanding evening with astrophysicist, musician, and NASA collaborator Matt Russo!

Can planets carry a tune? Do black holes scream? What is the heartbeat of a star? The universe may not be as silent as we once thought.

Join Dr. Matt Russo for an unforgettable journey through the sounds of space. Using the science of sonification, Dr. Russo transforms cosmic phenomena into mesmerizing soundscapes, revealing the hidden harmonies of the cosmos.

Discover how he blends astronomy and music to make space more accessible and how sound connects us to the vast, mysterious universe—and to one another. Whether you're a space enthusiast, a music lover, or simply curious, this unique event will change the way you experience the cosmos.

After completing degrees in jazz guitar and astrophysics, **Matt Russo** began to merge his two passions by founding the sci-art outreach project SYSTEM Sounds. His work has been featured in the *New York Times* and he frequently collaborates with NASA to make astronomy more accessible to the visually impaired. He is also a scientific consultant, having worked on Netflix's *Umbrella Academy*. Matt's TED Talk "What does the universe sound like? A Musical Tour" has been viewed almost 2 million times.

Event Ticket: \$40



NOELLE RUSSELL

CHIEF AI OFFICER,
AI LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

EMPOWERING INNOVATION WITH ETHICAL AI

CAROLINA THEATRE AT BELK PLACE

APRIL
3
7:00-8:30 PM



MATT RUSSO

ASTROPHYSICIST, MUSICIAN
& NASA COLLABORATOR

THE SONIFICATION OF THE UNIVERSE

MCCOLL CENTER

APRIL
4
7:30-9:00 PM





TIMELINES

PAST PERSPECTIVES. FUTURE INSIGHTS.

SESSIONS ALL DAY: 10:30 AM - 6:30 PM

APRIL
5

How do ideas evolve? How does history shape the present—and the future?

Join us in partnership with UNC Charlotte for Timelines, a dynamic day of panel discussions, interviews, and creative activations featuring local and regional thought leaders who challenge conventional wisdom and explore the ever-changing landscape of knowledge.

Throughout the day, engage in conversations that examine shifting narratives, breakthrough innovations, and transformative practices. Between sessions, enjoy unique experiences including:

- Interactive Art Installations
- Author Book Signings & Sales by Park Road Books
- Networking with Like-Minded Attendees & Experts
- Creative Activations and Table-Talks

Whether you're a lifelong learner, an innovator, or simply curious about the world around you, Timelines is your chance to gain fresh insights, make meaningful connections, and be inspired.

AT THE DUBOIS CENTER AT UNC CHARLOTTE CENTER CITY

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

in partnership with



**You're invited to Timelines:
Past Perspectives. Future Insights.**

Join us for one session or the whole day!
Turn the page for more event details.

10:30 AM - 11:00 AM	Registration & Networking	
11:00 AM - 12:15 PM	Story in Time: Voices in Historical Fiction	
12:15 - 1:00 PM	Book Signing & Lunch	
1:00 - 2:00 PM	Cultivating a Culture of Connection with TEDx Sugar Creek Women	Independent Picture House Short Film Screening and Discussion with Filmmaker
2:00 - 2:30 PM	Networking Break	
2:30 - 3:30 PM	Food As Medicine: The Power of Nutrition in Healthcare	Building Community with The Periodic Table of Human Emotions
3:30 - 4:00 PM	Networking Break	
4:00 - 5:00 PM	Internet Age from PC to AI	I Love a Parade
5:30 - 6:30 PM	The Marvel Universe in Old and New Media	Timekeeping & The Great Beyond



Day Pass: \$50 (Free for students with college ID)

Ticket includes access to all sessions throughout the day. We're proud to offer this event with the generosity of our sponsors and community partners.

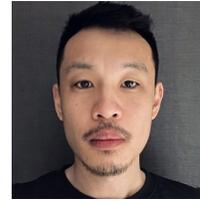


SATURDAY, APRIL 5TH

- 11:00 AM **Story in Time: Voices in Historical Fiction:** Step into the past with five celebrated authors as they explore the power of historical fiction to illuminate untold stories and reimagine history.
- 1:00 PM **A Conversation with TEDx Sugar Creek Women:** Gain exclusive insights into the upcoming TEDx Sugarcreek Women event as panelists discuss this year’s theme of Wired for Connection.
- 1:00 PM **Independent Picture House Short Films Screening and Discussion with Filmmaker:** Don’t miss this unique opportunity to experience festival-worthy films beyond the big screen!
- 2:30 PM **Food As Medicine: The Power of Nutrition in Healthcare:** As chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity continue to rise, a powerful movement is emerging—one that positions nutrition as a vital tool in both pre-venting and managing illness.
- 2:30 PM **Building Community with the Periodic Table of Human Emotions:** Learn how a daily emotional “check-in” creates a brave space where individuals can engage in deeper discussions and embrace the ability to have challenging conversations.
- 4:00 PM **The Internet Age from PC to AI:** Join us for a broad conversation on the multifaceted impact of the Internet on society, including our psychological well-being, culture production, political polarization and platform economy.
- 4:00 PM **I Love a Parade:** Discover the fascinating history of temporary decorations built for festivals from the 1700s to our modern day.
- 5:30 PM **The Marvel Universe in Old and New Media:** Explore how the Marvel Cinematic Universe is one of the highest-grossing media franchises ever, but it originated as a series of comic books from a small, failing comic book publisher.
- 5:30 PM **Timekeeping & The Great Beyond:** Join UNC Charlotte graduate students for a presentation and walk through Kyle Spence’s outdoor art installation titled “Sundial.”

SPEAKERS & PANELISTS

SPEAKERS & PANELISTS



Matthew Gin
Architectural Historian, UNC Charlotte



Chasidie Glover
Community Outreach Director, Nourish Up



Min Jiang
Professor of Communications Studies, UNC Charlotte



Chayil Johnson
Executive Chef, Community Matters Cafe



Elaine Jones
Senior Dietitian, Atrium Health



Aaron Kashtan
Assistant Professor, UNC Charlotte



Genny Komar
Associate Professor, Johnson & Wales



Vanessa Miller
Author of *The American Queen*



Adele Myers
Author of *The Tobacco Wives*



Shefalee V. Patel
Cultural Connector



Christine E. Pitkin
Founder, Civility Localized



Susie O. Schnall
Author of *We Came Here to Shine*



Joy Callaway
Author of *What the Mountains Remember*



Ian Binns
Professor, Elementary Education, UNC Charlotte



Camille di Maio
Author of *Come Fly with Me*



Kyle Spence
Assistant Professor, UNC Charlotte



Cara Truitt
Founder, TEDx Sugar Creek Women



Leslie Van Horn
Associate Professor, Johnson & Wales



Amy Wartham
Director of Executive Education, UNC Charlotte

You're invited to an exclusive lunchtime conversation with Rick Schnall, co-chairman of the Charlotte Hornets, and co-president of Clayton, Dubilier & Rice private equity firm, as he takes you behind the scenes of the sports industry. From the complexities of managing an NBA franchise to the business strategies that drive team success, this discussion will provide a unique look at the high-stakes world where athletics and business intersect.

Event Ticket: \$25



Upcoming Event: Get your tickets today for The Forum, featuring Michelle Icard!

Join us for an evening of cutting through the noise, confusion, and stress of modern parenting and leave understanding which parenting pressures are based on “myth” and which parenting practices actually give “meaning” to raising, happy, resilient kids and becoming a satisfied parent and person along the way.

Michelle Icard is a parenting author who has studied children, teens, parents and parenting trends for over twenty years. Her work is rooted in practical experience, a fascination with good research, and empathy for families who feel pressure to curate parenthood to fit the new “industry” of child rearing. Michelle has a background in education and curriculum development, has authored three best-selling parenting books, is a regular contributor to national news outlets, and travels the country to speak at schools and community organizations about raising tweens and teens.



<p>RICK SCHNALL CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE CHARLOTTE HORNETS</p> <p>THE BUSINESS OF SPORTS</p> <p>CAROLINA THEATRE AT BELK PLACE</p>	<p>APRIL 8 12:00- 1:15 PM</p> 	<p>MICHELLE ICARD BESTSELLING AUTHOR & EDUCATOR</p> <p>MYTHS & MEANING IN MODERN PARENTING</p> <p>CONNECT CONSIDER IGNITE</p> <p>MYERS PARK BAPTIST CHURCH</p>	<p>JUNE 24 6:30 - 8:00 PM</p> 
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Join The Charlotte Center's mission.

You can help Charlotte become a more vital and resilient community by supporting programs that enrich social trust and inspire new visions for our lives. Your contribution to The Charlotte Center ensures a different kind of hopeful conversation that informs and ignites positive change. Thank you for considering investing in programming that brings people together and celebrates the best of the humanities and civic imagination.

Learn about ways to give & support Charlotte becoming more connected and innovative today!



With Gratitude

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