Spotlight is on Brooks Center

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Clemson University's Brooks Center has probably never planned a more sparkling and dynamic performing arts season, says Mickey Harder, the irrepressible director of the Brooks.

The 2012-13 season opens with a concert by Broadway legend Barbara Cook on Sept. 6 and, throughout the year, features a significant expansion of its admission-free Utsey Series of world-class classical musicians.

"We're looking forward to a great season," Harder says. "I'm really excited that we're bringing someone like Barbara Cook, who was just honored by the Kennedy Center this past December. I've admired her for so long."

Cook is a veteran Broadway and cabaret singer who starred in the original 1956 production of Bernstein's "Candide" before moving to the original 1957 Broadway premiere of "Music Man," winning a Tony Award for the latter show.



Jazz singer/bassist Esperanza Spalding will perform at the Brooks Center on Oct. 17. CARLOS PERICAS

The Brooks Center hosts a wide range of touring musicians and productions while also serving as the home base for most of Clemson University's music, theater and choral groups.

Among other highlights of the season is jazz singer and bassist Esperanza Spalding, coming to Clemson on Oct. 17.

"I've been trying to get Esperanza Spalding since 2008," Harder says. "We finally got her this year and she's bringing a big band with her."

Cindy Williams, of "Laverne & Shirley" fame, will star in the comedy "Nunset Boulevard" on Nov. 26.

The American bluegrass group Dailey & Vincent journey to the Brooks Center on Oct. 1.

The innovative dance ensemble Momix on Jan. 31 brings to Clemson its acclaimed "Botanica," seen at Greenville's Peace Center to much acclaim last year.

Harder is particularly excited about the performers on the admission-free Lillian and Robert Utsey Chamber Music

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Series, now in its 27th year.

The series usually features four chamber music performances. This season, the lineup includes seven performances.

In addition, the series often spotlights younger musicians early in their careers. This season, the series features some big names in classical music, such as Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves on Feb. 8.

Graves and the other musicians on the Utsey Series will also offer separate, free concerts for school children during the daytime.

"We've got some wonderful people coming," Harder says. "What I'm most excited about is that every one of the seven performers on the Utsey Series will also be performing for children. Where in America can a child come to hear Denyce Graves for free?"

Others on the free Utsey Series includes violinist Elena Urioste (Sept. 27), the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (Oct. 8), guitarists Sergio and Odair Assad (Nov. 12), the Pacifica Quartet (Jan. 29), the Imani Winds (March 11) and the Tempest Trio (April 4).

Harder says she's particularly pleased to be able to bring minority school children to the Brooks Center to see nationally prominent minority performers in classical music, such as Graves and the Imani Winds.

"This is the best Utsey Series ever," Harder says.

Following is a selection of upcoming Brooks Center performances:

» **Sept. 6:** Singer Barbara Cook.

» **Sept. 19:** Amon Tobin. The concert by the electronic artist is a musical and visual feast.

» **Sept. 20:** Royal Drummers and Dancers of Burundi. The acclaimed performers showcase the rhythms, music and dance of East Africa.

» **Sept. 27:** Elena Urioste, violin.

» **Oct. 1:** Dailey & Vincent, the American bluegrass group.

» **Oct. 1-10:** "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." The Tony Award-winning musical is produced by the Clemson Players.

» **Oct. 8:** Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. (Part of the free Utsey Series)

» **Oct. 10:** Clemson University Symphony Orchestra.

» **Oct. 17:** Esperanza Spalding, jazz singer and bassist.

» **Oct. 23:** Clemson University Singers.

» **Nov. 5:** The Flying Karamazov Brothers. The juggling and comedy group comes to the Brooks Center for the first time.

» **Nov. 12:** Guitarists Sergio and Odair Assad. (Part of the free Utsey Series)



Momix will perform "Botanica" at the Brooks Center on Jan. 31. PUCCIARIELLO MAX



The Irish group Danu will perform at the Brooks Center on March 14. COLM HENRY

» **Nov. 16:** Clemson University Percussion Extravaganza.

» **Nov. 19:** Clemson University Symphonic Band.

» **Nov. 26:** "Nunset Boulevard," starring Cindy Williams.

» **Nov. 29:** Clemson University Jazz Ensemble.

» **Dec. 4:** Clemson University Symphony Orchestra.

» **Dec 6:** Clemson University Women's and Men's Glees.

» **Jan. 29:** Pacifica Quartet.

» **Jan. 31:** Momix. The innovative dance ensemble brings its critically acclaimed "Botanica" to Clemson.

» **Feb. 5:** "Cyrano de Bergerac," featuring the national touring ensemble Aquila Theatre.

» **Feb. 8:** Mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves. (Part of the free Utsey Series)

» **Feb. 12:** Birdland Big Band.

» **Feb. 28-March 3:** "Medea," featuring the Clemson Players.

» **March 7:** Creole Choir of Cuba.

» **March 11:** Imani Winds. (Part of the free Utsey Series)

» **March 14:** Danu, the Irish group.

» **April 4:** Tempest Trio. (Part of the free Utsey Series)

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