

Art & Soul celebrates 30 years with citywide artist activations

[Photos](#)

Indianapolis (May 7, 2026) – For 30 years, [Art & Soul](#) has celebrated Black art and music in Indianapolis. This year's partner events build on that legacy, creating paid opportunities for artists to share their work while reaching audiences beyond traditional arts venues. The series features artists from across Art & Soul's history, connecting past and present through shared stages and community experiences.

Since 1996, the Art & Soul program has spotlighted four Featured Artists through performances, exhibitions, and community events. Recognized for their exemplary contributions to our creative community, the 2026 Featured Artists are [Dr. Austin Dean Ashford](#), [Auboni Essence](#), [D'yshe Mansfield](#), and [Kenn.Wav](#).

Art & Soul 2026 community partner events:

[MELI x IMS Presents: The Pit Stop](#) (sold out) | May 9, 2026

A high-energy, family-friendly activation at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway blending motorsports, music, live art, and spoken word. Features Auboni Essence alongside local creatives, emphasizing artist compensation and community-centered cultural engagement.

[Indy Parks Alliance Summer Concert Series](#) | May 12 – October 1, 2026

A free, citywide concert series in neighborhood parks featuring multiple Art & Soul artists, including 2026 Featured Artist D'yshe Mansfield. Performances span genres and communities, increasing access to live arts experiences across Indianapolis.

[Harrison Center Rooftop Concert featuring Kenn.Wav](#) | June 5, 2026

2026 Featured Artist Kenn.Wav performs a free rooftop concert following a 48-hour songwriting residency. The event highlights new work created on-site and offers an intimate live music experience for the public.

[Bashiri Asad: The Soul of Nap at The Cabaret](#) | June 20, 2026

Bashiri Asad traces the roots of soul – from gospel and Blues to Motown, funk, and modern R&B – weaving the stories, sounds, and spirit that have defined generations.

[Art & Soul at Indiana Black Expo](#) | July 17–19, 2026

The Cultural Arts Pavilion celebrates regional artists through exhibitions, performances, and interactive experiences. Explore meaningful art, connect with creatives, and engage with partners preserving Indiana's artistic legacy.

[Indy Dance Festival](#) | July 18–19, 2026

Presented by Indy Dance Council, this citywide festival includes performances, masterclasses, and community workshops. 2024 Featured Artist Austin "Sirlimitless" Day participates in programming celebrating movement, collaboration, and creative expression.

[The Alley Sessions at The Cabaret feat. Mariah Ivey](#) | August 7, 2026

A free outdoor concert featuring 2026 Featured Artist Mariah Ivey. This vibrant series blends music, public art, and community gathering in a downtown pop-up cultural space.

[Hip Hop Anthology: Volume 7](#) | August 9, 2026

Presented by Arts for Learning, this multidisciplinary initiative explores hip hop as a living American archive. Featuring 2018 Art & Soul Featured Artist Gary Gee, the project connects youth and community through a summer camp, exhibition, and public programming.

[IF Theatre: The Last First Lady: Blackout at the White House](#) | September 11–13, 2026

A new theatrical work by 2009 Featured Artist Gabrielle Patterson that explores the lived experience of Black womanhood, identity, and public scrutiny through an intimate, multi-scene performance.

Additional partner events will be presented in collaboration with [Brick Street Poetry Inc.](#) and [Flanner House](#).

Art & Soul Sundays

The public can also experience the program through **Art & Soul Sundays** at the Indianapolis Artsgarden. These free performances bring together current Featured Artists and alumni for afternoons of music and artistic expression:

- May 17: [The Poet's Way feat. Auboni Essence](#)
- June 14: [Kenn.Wav and Friends](#)
- July 12: [D'yshe Mansfield](#)
- August 9: [LIVE with Dr. Austin Dean Ashford](#)

Featured Artist Showcase

The year's programming culminates on the evening of Saturday, October 10 with the Art & Soul Featured Artist Showcase, produced and hosted by the Madam Walker Legacy Center. Featuring Dr. Austin Dean Ashford, Kenn.Wav, Auboni Essence, and D'yshe Mansfield, the event brings all four artists together for an evening of music, spoken word, and theater.

As Art & Soul enters its 30th year, these events mark a continued commitment to collaboration, access, and investment in Indianapolis' Black arts and culture community. Art & Soul is hosted by Indy Arts Council in partnership with the Madam Walker Legacy Center, with annual support from Lilly Endowment Inc.

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About Indy Arts Council

Indy Arts Council is central Indiana's leading arts advocacy and services agency. Their mission is to champion arts and culture. Indy Arts Council believes every resident should experience arts and culture in a way that nourishes and inspires them. This vision of a creative life for all is central to the work they do to support artists, arts organizations, and the community.