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A view of the lobby bar in the new Gulfshore Playhouse state-of-the-art Baker Theatre and Education Center, set to open in fall 2023 near the intersection of First Avenue South and Goodlette-Frank Road. SUBMITTED

# Performance arts bringing a high-visibility 2022 in Naples

Harriet Howard Heithaus

Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Even if we don’t set foot in a theater, we will see more of the performing arts just by being in Naples this year: Two organizations responsible for that high visibility have been generating a good deal of suspense already:

- The hope that walls will finally begin to rise for Gulfshore Playhouse’s new complex.
- Curiosity about the new venue and celebrities for Opera Naples’ Festival Under the Stars.

The first marks the culmination of a dream that’s been a long time coming for Gulfshore Playhouse, which was incorporated here in 2004. The second is a gamble that turned pandemic restrictions into a wildly successful outdoor festival for Opera Naples last year.

## Bricks and mortar ahead

Kristen Coury, founder and artistic director of Gulfshore Playhouse, would be the first to admit she didn’t approach the second calendar year potentially dominated by a pandemic, holding much hope. But 2021 turned out to be full of good news, she said.

First and foremost, she was delighted to get Actors Equity approval for two plays indoors, so Gulfshore Playhouse could offer a two-play winter season of “Love Letters” and “Maytag Virgin,” with married couples in the two-actor plays.

“I don’t know of another professional theater in the country that got that number of approvals. That is for me one of the hugest happinesses of the year.”



The audience and orchestra ready Thursday for “La Traviata,” the first opera at Baker Park, which plays on the stage in front of the screen. HARRIET HOWARD HEITHAUS

said Coury, who said she unsuccessfully scouted outdoor venues. “Producing outside is complicated. There’s the wind. The noise. It’s just very expensive.”

Even with married couples in the two plays, everyone from sound technicians to ushers had to be squeaky clean, including a series of cabaret performances that didn’t need Equity. So the theater set up an agreement with NCH for regular testing.

“We were testing people three times a week,” she said. “But we ended up doing 47 nights of performances and keeping 7,000 people safe.”

“It was a blessing,” she said of the season. But she was about to get another: \$32 million for her capital campaign, which cemented plans to break ground for its own theater on Goodlette Road a block from U.S. 41 South, flanking the

new Naples Design District.

“We stopped fundraising totally between March and October of 2020,” Coury recalled. It seemed unsafe; it seemed impolite in a time of worry. But when the stock market began rising at the end of 2020, major gifts, taking the example of a \$5 million gift from board chairman Steve Akin and his wife, Jane, began coming in.

Then, supporters Patty and Jay Baker, who had initially offered a \$10 million matching grant, offered a second one.

“It took us four years to make the first match of \$10 million. It took us six weeks to make the second,” Coury marveled. The groundbreaking was Dec. 1. But the actual construction begins sometime in the next 10 days.

“We’re now mobilized and ready to start construction,” she said. Construction completion target: Late summer

2023. Occupancy goal: January 2024.

The adjacent parking garage, for which the theater offered land if the city provided the garage, is awaiting city requests for proposals from design-build companies. A goal is to tie the theater, via underground passage, to the garage.

“Hopefully it all gets finished by fall of 2023,” she said.

**Information:** Gulfshore Playhouse.org or (239) 261-7529

## More starlight, please

Cambier Park turns into an opera house of — figuratively — diamond quality for a week in March.

That might be said because its stars, three tenors, include some international gems:

- Joseph Calleja, who swept the house off its feet at the premiere Festival Under the Stars, March 11
- Ramon Vargas, a familiar Metropolitan Opera lead, in the Puccini opera, “Tosca” March 13 and 15
- Javier Camarena, who has been cheered to encores three times at the Met, March 16

(All Cambier Park performances are at 7 p.m; seats are \$28 to VIP tables of six, \$900.)

But the diamond status is actually because the festival is moving to one: Cambier Park’s softball field. That move, after the festival’s 2021 debut in Baker Park, promises relief from Naples Airport jet fumes, restricted seating capacity and passing park patrons, such as one with a dog that began barking after an opening night aria by Calleja.

The Maltese tenor took the intrusion

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# Author Cade Metz talks AI in first Friends of the Library lecture series

Vicky Bowles

Special to Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Over the past few decades, a bunch of smart guys built artificial intelligence systems that have had deep impact on our everyday lives. But do they — and their billion-dollar companies — have the human intelligence to keep artificial intelligence safe and ethical?

Questions like this are part of the history and overview of artificial intelligence in Cade Metz’s book “Genius Makers: The Mavericks Who Brought AI to Google, Facebook, and the World.”

On Monday, Jan. 17, Metz, a technology correspondent for The New York Times and former senior writer for Wired magazine, is the first speaker in



Metz

the 2022 Nonfiction Author Series, sponsored by the nonprofit Friends of the Library of Collier County, which raises money for public library programs and resources.

The lecture series includes breakfast and is being held this year at a new venue, the Kensington Country Club in Naples. The series is sold out, but you can contact the Friends to be put on a waiting list. (See info box for details.)

Metz grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina, where his parents met while both working for IBM, so computing is in his blood. His father helped develop the Universal Product Code (UPC) — that ubiquitous bar code that now is on ab-

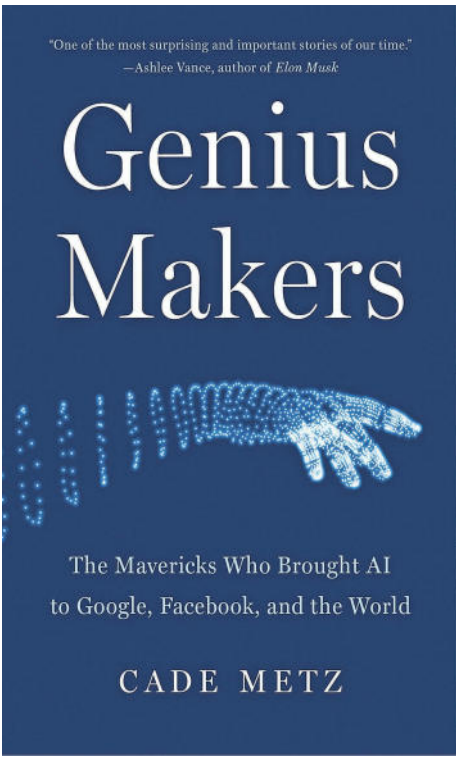
solutely everything. Metz attended Duke University as an IBM scholarship student, majoring in English and planning to be a writer, while also working at IBM as a programmer.

“Genius Makers,” his first book, centers on advances in technology, but his real impetus was to write about the fascinating characters who were developing these ideas and visions. The book focuses on two unusual men whose research in artificial intelligence has driven a technology arms race. And it raises intriguing questions, such as: What does it mean to be human?

Metz answered some questions ahead of his talk in Naples.

**Naples Daily News:** What are the

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FLORIDA



# Bowie’s catalog is sold to Warner

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK – The extensive music catalog of David Bowie, stretching from the late 1960s to just before his death in 2016, has been sold to Warner Chappell Music.

More than 400 songs, among them “Space Oddity,” “Ziggy Stardust,” “Fame,” “Rebel Rebel” and “Let’s Dance” on 26 Bowie studio albums released during his lifetime, a posthumous studio album release, Toy, two



David Bowie

studio albums from Tin Machine, as well as tracks released as singles from soundtracks and other projects, are included.

Financial details of the sale were not released. Warner Chapell is the music publishing wing of Warner Music Group Corp.

Bruce Springsteen

sold his catalog to Sony Music last month for a reported \$500 million. Among others that have sold their catalogs in recent years, either in part or in their entirety, are Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Stevie Nicks.

David Bowie, born David Jones in London in 1947, died in January 2016 after battling cancer for 18 months. As a performer, Bowie had unpredictable range of styles, melding European jadedness with American rhythms. The

gaunt and erudite Bowie brought an open theatricality and androgyny to popular music that changed the very meaning of being a rock star.

He was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1996.

Last year Warner Music Group reached a deal with the Bowie estate that gave Warner Music licensed worldwide rights to Bowie’s recorded music catalog from 1968.

## Pivotal songs and albums

### Albums:

- “Space Oddity” (1969)
- “The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars” (1972)
- “Diamond Dogs” (1974)
- “Young Americans” (1975)
- “ChangesOneBowie” (1976)
- “Heroes” (1977)
- “Let’s Dance” (1983)
- “Tonight” (1984)
- “Heathen” (2002)
- “The Next Day” (2013)
- “Blackstar” (2016)

### Songs:

- “Space Oddity” (1969)
- “Changes” (1972)
- “Rebel Rebel” (1974)
- “Young Americans” (1975)
- “Fame” (1975)
- “Golden Years” (1975)
- “Suffragette City” (1976)
- “Heroes” (1977)
- “Fashion” (1980)
- “Under Pressure” (with Queen) (1981)
- “Let’s Dance” (1983)
- “China Girl” (1983)
- “Modern Love” (1983)
- “Blue Jean” (1984)
- “Where Are We Now?” (2013)

## More information

**What:** Author lectures and breakfasts that are a major fundraiser for the Collier County Public Library system

**Where:**Kensington Country Club, 2700 Pine Ridge Road, Naples

**When:** Breakfast is served at 8:30 a.m.; authors speak at 9:15 a.m., followed by a book signing

**Author lineup:** Cade Metz, Monday, Jan. 17; Catherine Grace Katz, Monday, Feb. 14; Jared Diamond, Monday, March 7; and Jonathan Kaufman, Monday, March 28

**COVID precautions:** Kensington Country Club has a protocol based on CDC guidelines. On an honor basis, people who are sick or who have symptoms should not attend; people who are vaccinated need not wear a mask; people who are not vaccinated should wear a mask until seated at their table; and people who have been sick can attend after five days isolation if they are asymptomatic and wear a mask until seated at their table.

**Cost:** \$250 for all four events for members of the Friends of the Library of Collier County, and \$295 for nonmembers. Friends memberships begin at \$30/year and provide access and discounts to other programs; sign up at collier-friends.org.

**Tickets:** The series is sold out but there is a waiting list. Email Marlene Haywood at mhaywood@collier-friends.org or call 239-262-8135.

## Author

Continued from Page 1D

most common, everyday example of how AI (artificial intelligence) has affected the world in the past 20 years?

**Cade Metz:** The best examples are talking digital assistants like Siri and Alexa, which have improved significantly over the past decade. They can recognize spoken words with the accuracy of a human. Their synthetic voices are increasingly lifelike. And though they have not yet reached the point where they can actually carry on a conversation — really understand the meaning of what they are hearing and properly respond to it — their language skills continue to improve.

Meanwhile, the fundamental concepts that underpin these digital assistants are driving a wide range of other technologies, including online services like Google Translate that instantly translate between languages and warehouse robots that sort through giant bins of random stuff.

**NDN:** The dream of self-driving cars is, for most people, the face of how AI could change our lives. How realistic do you think a true, safe self-driving car is in, say, the next decade?

**CM:** This technology continues to improve. But it is still a long way from everyday life. Only one company — a Google

spinoff called Waymo — is actually offering a self-driving car service, and that is in the suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona, where the roads are wide, pedestrians are few and the weather is good. When it rains, the company halts the service, and at times, when the cars are unable to navigate on their own, the company uses remote control software to get them going again. What this means is that it will likely be a decade or more before these vehicles are commonplace.

**NDN:** This was such a wonderful sentence early on in your book: “As an undergraduate at Harvard (in the 1940s), using over three thousand vacuum tubes and a few parts from an old B-52 bomber, (Marvin) Minsky built what may have been the first neural network.” Is that kind of amateur, garage-built science still possible, given the speed of innovation now and the billions of dollars that are thrown at development?

**CM:** It certainly is. It happens all the time, inside universities and out. But in the AI field, this has been eclipsed by the work at giant companies like Google and Facebook. That is one of the major threads in my book: academia struggling to keep up with the rapid rate of progress in the tech industry. It is a real problem. So much of the talent is moving into industry, leaving the cupboard bare at universities. Who will teach the next generation? Who

will keep the big tech companies in check?

**NDN:** I was amused to see that Google and DeepMind built a team “dedicated to what they called ‘AI safety,’ an effort to ensure that the lab’s technologies did no harm.” My question is, who defines harm within this race to monetize new technologies? Isn’t, for example, the staggering amount of electrical power used to run these systems harmful to the globe?

**CM:** I am glad you were amused. These companies say we should trust them to ensure AI “safety” and “ethics,” but the reality is that safety and ethics are in the eye of the beholder. They can shape these terms to mean whatever they like. Many of the AI researchers at the heart of my book are genuinely concerned about how AI will be misused — how it will cause harm — but when they get inside these large companies, they find that their views clash with the economic aims of these tech giants.

**NDN:** Along the same lines, you address how the neural networks “learn” by hoovering up data from the web. Since much of what’s on the web is false or misleading — sometimes inadvertently, sometimes on purpose — what’s the gatekeeper to ensure that what’s “learned” is accurate? Even the word “accurate” is often subjective now.

**CM:** A neural network — the idea at the heart of modern AI — is a mathematical system that learns tasks by analyzing data. By pinpointing patterns in thousands of cat photos, for instance, a neural network can learn to identify a cat. This is the technology that allows Siri to recognize spoken words. It lets Google Translate and Skype translate from one language to another. Trouble is that this technology learns from such enormous amounts of data, we humans can’t wrap our head around it all. The designers of these systems can’t always see the false, misleading or biased information that ends up defining the technology’s behavior.

This is a huge issue for a new kind of system that learns language skills from all sorts of text posted to the internet. The internet, of course, is filled with false and biased information — not to mention hate speech and so many other things we don’t want our machines learning from. What is and what is not biased is subjective. In today’s world, what is and what is not fake news is subjective. So, yes, who will be the gatekeeper? Google? Facebook? Government regulators? We don’t know.

**NDN:** Could you talk about gender and racial biases? That section of the book was fascinating, such as AI’s inability to differentiate Black faces

because the network hadn’t seen enough Black people to learn.

**CM:** This is a very real problem. Researchers have shown that face recognition systems, speech recognition systems and the latest conversational systems can be biased against women and people of color. This is often because the technology is built by white men who don’t realize they are training these systems with data that reflects only part of our society. The good news is that tech companies are waking up to the issue, and many activists and researchers are pushing for change. But it is sometimes a hard problem to solve. And, yes, the companies often have their own view of what is and what is not biased.

The Nonfiction Author Series also has announced its 2022 sponsors. Platinum sponsors are Bigham Jewelers, John R. Wood Properties, Stock Development and The Club at Olde Cypress; Gold sponsors are Books-a-Million, Gulf Coast International Properties, Naples MacFriends User Group and The Capital Grille; Silver sponsors are Tradewind Pools and Wynn’s Market.

Before each author’s presentation, a drawing will be held among ticket holders for a \$250 gift certificate from Bigham Jewelers and \$100 gift card from The Capital Grille.

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