

WPA Native Wins Fifth Oscar Award

Western Pennsylvania native and visual effects artist [Joseph Letteri](#) earned an impressive fifth Academy Award at this year's ceremony.

The honor was for his work on the mega-hit "Avatar: The Way of Water." As the *Hollywood Reporter's* Carolyn Giardina writes, the award was "surprising no one."

"But Letteri didn't get to thank any family or co-workers on camera during the worldwide telecast," reports Scott Tady for the *Beaver County Times*. "One of his fellow "Avatar" recipients gave a slow-to-unwind acceptance speech and though Letteri, whose name was listed first, looked ea-

ger to say something on camera, too, he got cut short by the live symphony playing music to signify the show intended to move forward."

Letteri was born and raised about 20 miles northwest of Pittsburgh in the rural Butler County town of Aliquippa. After graduating from Center High School he earned a degree from the **University of California – Berkley**.

His career is closely tied with New Zealand filmmaker Peter Jackson. The two worked together on the "Lord of the Rings" films. "The Way of Water" was directed by another common collaborator, James Cameron. They

first worked together on 1989's "The Abyss". Letteri's other credits include "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (1991), "Mission Impossible" (1996) and "Avatar" (2009).

Letteri has been called "The Master of Motion Capture" by IndieWire's Bill Desowitz. [In a [2019 article](#), Desowitz interviewed director Matt Reeves on working with Letteri – ed.]

He is currently tied for #2 in the category with fellow five-timer Ken Ralston ("Forest Gump"). Dennis Murren ("Jurassic Park") leads with eight statuettes. Letteri currently runs Jackson's special effects company, **Weta FX**.

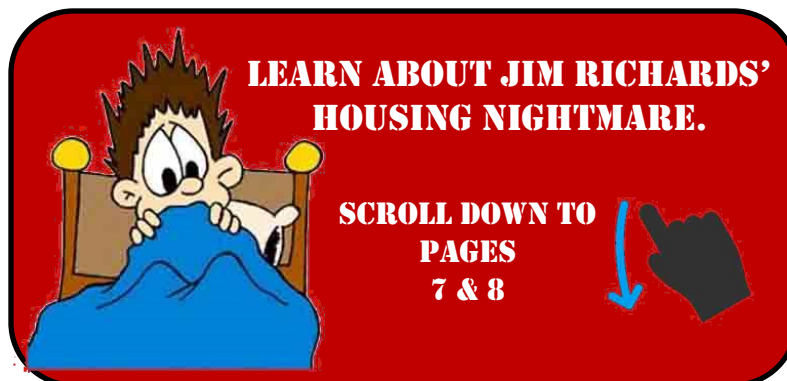
Local Documentary To Be Honored

A documentary about the Tree of Life tragedy will be among those honored by the **African American Film Critics Association** (AAFCA), reports Greg Evans for Deadline.

During the worship services of October 27, 2018, a "bearded heavy-set white male" entered the

synagogue, opened fire and was "shooting for about 20 minutes." Eleven people were killed. [It was the deadliest attack on the American-Jewish community in history](#). Robert Gregory Bowers was arrested and charged.

["A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting"](#) recounts the horrors of that day while exploring the undercurrents of hatred that led to it and similar crimes. Learn more by reading [the full article](#).





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Comcast Earns Tech Emmy

The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) has bestowed an Emmy Award for Technology & Engineering to **Comcast Corporation**.



Comcast operates Pittsburgh's cable television franchise and is the corporate parent of NBC-Universal.

The award was in recognition of the company's Virtualized Cable Modem Termination Systems (VCMTS). The technology is described as decreasing "the cost of delivering broadband service, enables flexible deployment of network changes and more efficient load balancing of broadband traffic to customers alleviating congestion, providing unprecedented real-time service visibility and ultimately improving the reliability and performance of broadband service."

The formal ceremony will be held on April 16.

Artists Support Teacher

On April 1, a group of artists staged a special exhibition to show support for a local educator being held by the Russian Federation government.

That educator is [Marc Fogel](#), a native of Butler with an extensive resume teaching history at schools around the world. His current post is with the **Anglo-American School of Moscow**. The independent, non-profit school teaches approximately 900 children between the ages of 4 and 18. More about the institution can be learned by clicking [here](#).

Fogel was arrested in 2021 at Sheremetyevo Alexander S. Pushkin International Airport near Moscow after half an ounce of marijuana was found in his luggage. (It had been proscribed for back pain by an American doctor). He was later sentenced to 14 years in prison and is currently in a penal colony.

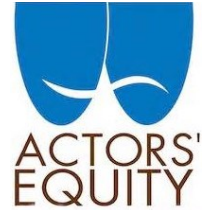
The April event was organized by Pittsburgh artist Tom Mosser in collaboration with one of Fogel's attorneys. Among those participating is Randy Backes, an artist and college friend of Fogel.

"He's a humanitarian," Backes told the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's* Paul Guggenheimer, "he's a family guy, he's got a loving wife, two beautiful children. The guy would give you the shirt off his back." [Read Guggenheimer's full article](#).

AEA & LORT Deal Reached

A tentative agreement has been reached between **Actors' Equity Association** (AEA) and the **League of Resident Theatres** (LORT),

AEA represents more than 51,000 professional actors and stage managers in live theater, including those in Pittsburgh. LORT is the nation's largest professional theater association. Its members include the **Pittsburgh Public Theater** and **City Theatre**.



"The new contract features important advances in safety rules and equity, diversity and inclusion provisions. In return we agreed to terms that give employers opportunities to maximize their ability to rebuild and expand their audiences [in the wake of the pandemic]," union executive director Andrea Hoeschen explains in a press release.

The agreement still needs to be ratified by each organization's membership. More information is available by clicking [here](#).



Accelerator Grants

More than two dozen area entrepreneurs are sharing a total of \$50,000 in grants administered by the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC).



The funds are part of the **Pennsylvania Council on the Arts'** (PCA) Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator program to support a creative business.

“This round of funding for Pittsburgh’s creative economy had an overwhelming response,” GPAC’s Mia Hooper says in a press release. “We received far more applications than we had funds for. Unfortunately, this means that the funds supplied by the [PCA] ran out quickly. This is an indication of the incredible interest from our community of creative entrepreneurs who bring their work to life, fueling our creative economy.” The full list is available by clicking [here](#).

City Art Commission Meets

The newly formed Pittsburgh Art & Civic Design Commission held its first meeting, reports WESA-FM’s Bill O’Driscoll.

On March 22, the commission approved artwork for the next incarnation of the Fern Hollow Bridge. The first span to cover a large ravine in Frick Park was a steel arch bridge completed in 1901. It was replaced in 1973 by a three-span steel ridge-frame bridge. This structure partially collapsed on January 28, 2022 with a city bus trapped on it. The event coincided with a planned trip to Pittsburgh by President Joe Biden who was scheduled to speak on the nation’s infrastructure. Construction on a replacement bridge began that May.

According to O’Driscoll, the board unanimously approved a

Artist Therapy Grant

The small organization **Artist Talk, Therapeutic Spaces** has received a grant of \$65,000 from the **Staunton Farm Foundation** to support its series of workshops for artists of color who are experiencing mental health challenges.

Artist Talk’s web site describes itself as “an art and performance event series centered around mental health for the black community. Artists from all mediums, like visual artists, photographers, musicians, and more, come together to bring mental health conversation to the forefront by sharing stories behind some of their most personal work.”

The grant will help finance an increase in the number of workshops and giving access to mental health therapy to over 100 local Black and Brown artists. **The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC) serves as the group’s fiscal sponsor. [Learn more about Artist Talk by clicking here.](#)

sculpture of stones and trees proposed by artist Carin Mince-moyer. Read his full report by clicking [here](#). Now partially opened, the new Fern Hollow Bridge is expected to be finished this spring.

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Warhol Promotes Law

The Andy Warhol Museum has confirmed Dan Law's promotion to associate director. The Warhol is part of the **Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh**.



"I started at The Warhol in 2018, and the team and people here immediately accepted me and shared in my excitement about new possibilities for the museum," said Law in a press release. "Since then, I've had the privilege of designing and launching The Pop District, and now we have the opportunity to advance the project to its full potential."

Law has held multiple positions at the museum. Previously he has worked for various other nonprofits, including the **World Affairs Council**.

Unions To End COVID Rules

The major entertainment unions have agreed to formally end the COVID-19 protocols, according to a joint statement released March 30.

May 11 is the expiration date set by the **Directors Guild of America (DGA)**, **International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)**, **International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)** and **Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA)**,

PSO Hires Oboist

Samuel Nemec has been named Second Oboe by the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO)**.

Born in South Korea, the musician grew up in New Jersey and attended the prestigious **Julliard School**. At the school Nemec studied under the notables such as Elaine Douvas, the Principal Oboe at the **Metropolitan Opera Orchestra**. He is currently a member of the **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**, which has posted a brief bio of the musician [here](#).

Nemec joins the PSO this September for the 2023-2024 season.



DGA Names Outreach Leaders

Paris Barclay and Thomas Schlamme have been named co-chairs of the outreach team at the **Directors Guild of America (DGA)**.



The team's mission is to support increased member engagement and awareness as the union prepares for negotiations.

"With their experience as former presidents of the DGA and their unrivaled knowledge of our industry, Paris and Tommy will serve as incredible representatives of our Guild to our members as we prepare to win the best possible contract for our members," said union president Lesli Linka Glatter in a press release. "With their guidance, the DGA Outreach Team is ready to unite our 19,000 members to fight for our future."

[Paris Barclay](#) has had a broad career as a director and producer of projects ranging from music videos to the critically acclaimed "American Horror Story." He won two Emmy Award for directing episodes of "NYPD Blue." [Thomas Schlamme](#) is best known for his work with Aaron Sorkin on hit television series such as "Sports Night" and "The West Wing."



JAMES A. RICHARDS' HOUSING NIGHTMARE



Jim Richard has provided key resources to Pittsburgh's arts and entertainment community for decades. This, despite serious health issues such as spinal stenosis and major depression.

He seldom makes any money from them (ads in *Pittsburgh Applause* are either trades or comp). His only steady source of income is SSI Disability. Jim lived in Midtown Towers since the early 2000's paying subsidized rent.



Shortly after it was purchased by Boston-based Beacon Communities, Midtown Towers caught fire. One resident died and dozens of others were displaced. Jim worked closely with the building manager to bring much needed aid to his neighbors. He even fielded some media inquiries. Eventually, most tenants were temporarily relocated to a complex in Baldwin while Midtown underwent a complete remodel.

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown occurred during the Midtown residents' exurban exile. There would thereafter be very little communication from Beacon. Adding to the isolation was the sudden removal of the long-time manager. There was no explanation.



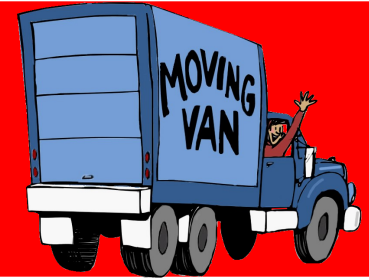
Residents eventually returned to Midtown with a new manager (in fact, an entirely new building staff installed. None of whom had any history with Midtown).

The time came to renew Jim's rent subsidy. This is normally a routine matter. But the new manager instigated a verbal incident by insulting her predecessor — who had gone above-and-beyond the tenants during Midtown's biggest crisis. Her superiors later called Jim to apologize. Jim realized that he should not meet with the manager unless at least one of his support team was present. She repeatedly stonewalled such a meeting until well past the subsidy period's expiration. This left Jim technically in debt to Midtown for the market-rate rent (he faithfully paid the subsidy amount each month). Jim was forced out of Midtown Towers.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



JAMES A. RICHARDS' HOUSING NIGHTMARE



Despite the problems with the Midtown manager, Jim had no problem qualifying for a subsidized apartment with both the City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority and the Brew House Lofts.

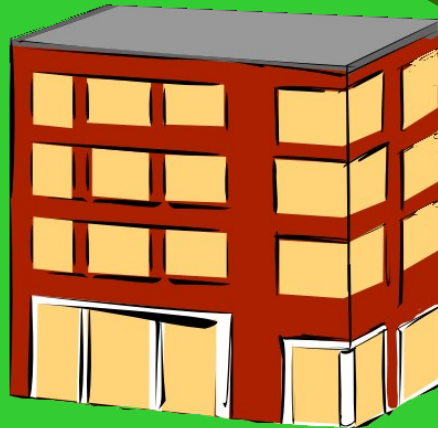


Jim established a GoFundMe campaign. Many wonderful people contributed more than \$900 to help finance his relocation. Unfortunately, some unscrupulous movers scammed him out of much of these funds. The Pittsburgh Police Department is investigating. A non-profit organization has stepped in to pay a reliable firm to finish the move.

Jim is out of Midtown Towers and now resides at the Brew House.

Unfortunately, legal issues remain: primarily Beacon's claim that Jim owes the company thousands in unpaid rent.

A pro bono attorney has been retained. But there will still be expenses. So, please keep those donations coming!



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Lost Legacy Rediscovered

Jessie Wardarski reports for the Associated Press (AP) that efforts are underway at the **University of Pittsburgh** to restore a nearly lost legacy.

That legacy belongs to composer, publisher and choral director [Charles Pace](#) (1886-1963), who was among the first African



American gospel music composers and publishers. Wardarski explains that after Pace's death, his music store "was sold and his archives went with it. Eventually, the materials made their way to auction, and the university's library system bought them in 1999." The fourteen boxes were essentially gathering dust for some two decades until music historian Christopher Lynch became involved.

"This is something that we can, as Pittsburghers, all be proud of," Wardarski quotes Lynch. "Charles Pace was a tremendous figure in music history." Read his full article by clicking [here](#).



Clemente Bio Pic Planned

A biographical film about Pittsburgh sports legend [Roberto Clemente](#) (1934-1972) is in the development, reports Rosy Cordero for Deadline.

Born in Puerto Rico the son of a sugar cane worker (and the youngest of seven children), Clemente began playing professional baseball at age 18. He spent the bulk of his major league career with the **Pittsburgh Pirates**. Clemente helped break the color barrier in big time sports, set or broke several records and was active in charitable projects.

The planned film will be best on the best-selling book *Clemente: The True Legacy of an Undying Hero*. Cordero writes that it "will showcase Clemente's rise to greatness against all odds and tell his inspirational life story inclusive of both his baseball career as well as his fight for Latin American equality and social justice." Clemente's sons Roberto Jr. and Luis will be among the executive producers. Read the full article by clicking [here](#).



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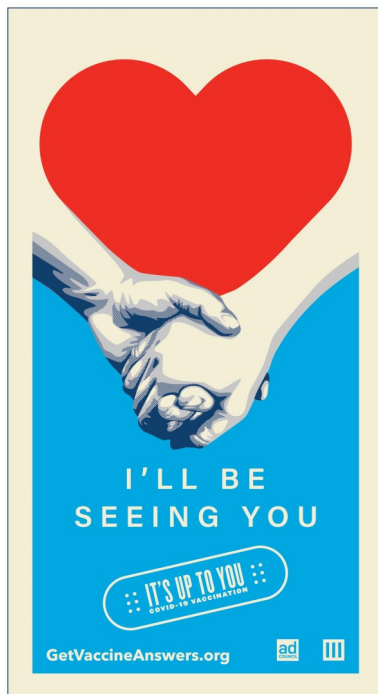
Pittsburgh presents the world debut of Lauren Yee's funny and engaging new play. "Young Americans." (April 26 at the O'Reilly)

New Venue Coming

Local comedian Steve Hofstetter is moving forward with plans to convert a former chapel into a multi-use performance space.

The New York City native relocated to Pittsburgh in 2021 telling the *Jewish Chronicle* “[Pittsburgh has] ‘all the amenities I would want in a big city — I could get anything I need — but it’s a small-town feel. Things are geographically close to each other; you don’t have to be in the car that long. Its people are super nice.’”

“The décor will be unique,” Hofstetter explained to Pittsburgh Patch’s Eric Heyl. A key element will be moveable panels allowing an audience to be “seated in an old saloon, a living room, or a barber-shop. The only limit is our imagination.” [Read Heyl’s full article.](#)



Pitt’s Student Music Club

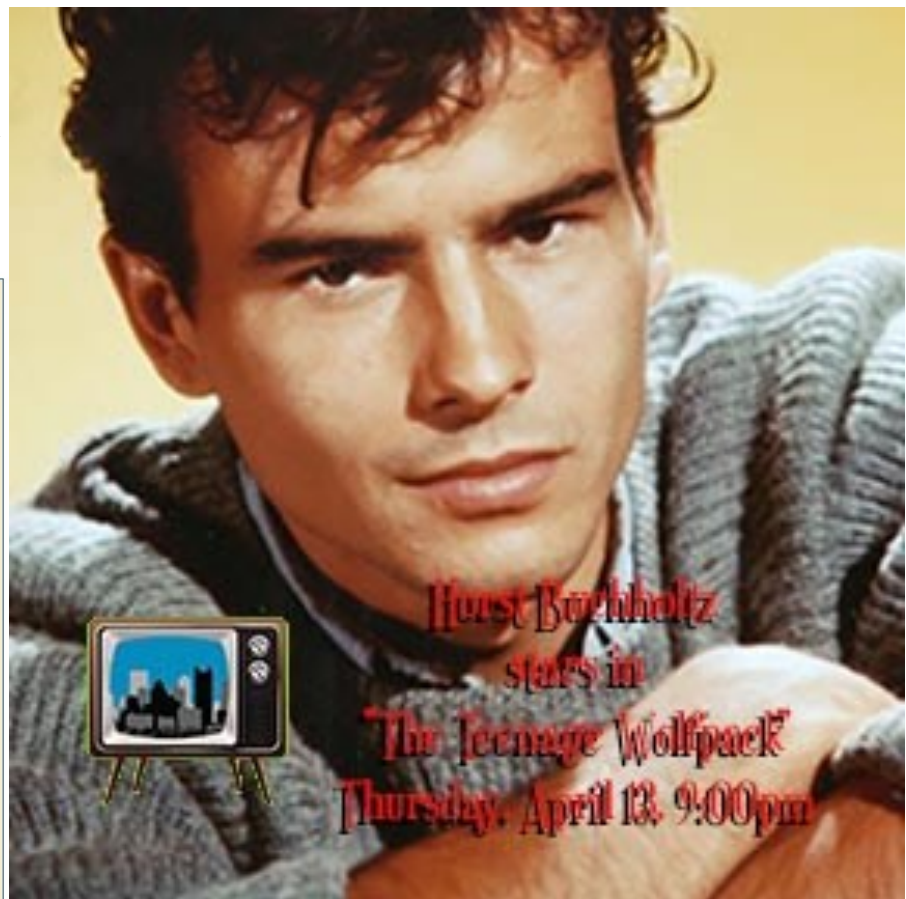
Every college has its clubs, but the **University of Pittsburgh** has a particularly interesting one, writes Serena Garcia for *Pitt News*.

It is called the Music Production Club “is a place for students passionate about creating music to share, collaborate and learn techniques from one another.”

The participating students that Garcia interviews come from a

surprising diverse range of majors: Ethan Herring is studying neuroscience, Brandon Rodas criminal justice and Alex Gosek environmental science.

“I thought it was a cool way to meet people with similar interests in Pittsburgh,” she quotes Gosek. The total number of members is unclear. “Before joining the club, Rodas was creating both rap and hip-hop music, but has now divulged into exploring producing a new genre --- drill music.”





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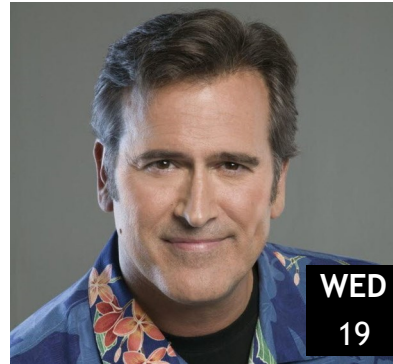
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Opportunities

A call for artists has been issued by the **Brew House Association** for a new installation. Details [here](#).

WTAE-TV, the local **Hearst**-owned ABC affiliate has an opening for a strong, take-charge News Producer who knows how to create memorable newscasts. Details [here](#).

A virtual conference is being presented by the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC) on self-sustainability, ecosystem building and community support. [It will be held on April 13](#). In addition, GPAC is co-hosting an in-person networking event on [April 15](#).

The Mattress Factory's Exhibitions Department is seeking applications for a Temporary Exhibitions Installer. Details [here](#).

Applications are being accepted by the **Pennsylvania Council on the Arts** (PCA) for another round accelerator grants. [Click here to learn more](#).

Various positions remain available at the **National Aviary** that include programming, events and education. Details [here](#).

Opportunities at the **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre** center on education. Details [here](#).

Audition applications are being accepted by the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** for the position of First Bassoon through April 10. Details [here](#).

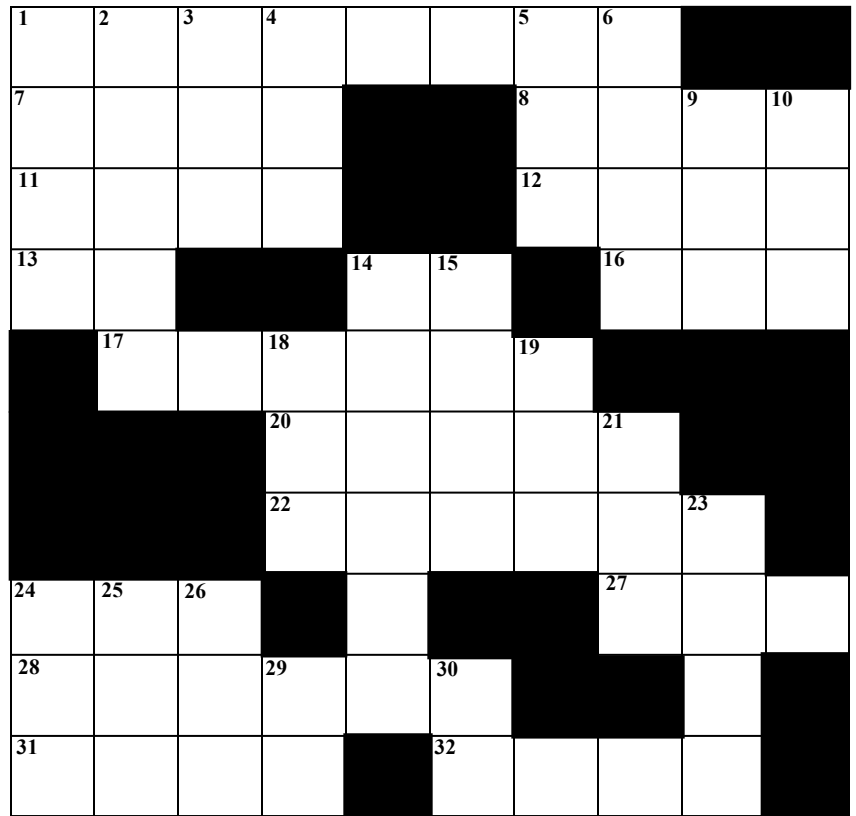
A part-time art teacher is being sought by **Assemble**. Details [here](#).

Summer artist residences are available at **BOOM Concepts**. Details [here](#).



Across

1. The Pittsburgh neighborhood where Billy Strayhorn grew up.
7. Tennis even
8. What "Life" is, according to a 1933 Strayhorn song
11. Provide temporarily
12. Alternative rocker Mikky, who'll probably never sing something Billy wrote
13. A 1980's TV sitcom or a 1990's TV drama (both with George Clooney)
14. Methylidyne, symbolically
16. Center of a storm
17. Transportation per a 1939 Strayhorn classic tune
20. One of the Three Musketeers
22. It's a "Lovesome Thing," per a 1961 Billy song
24. Ripen
27. Sadness
28. Original moniker for the theater now co-named for Billy
31. Horn sound
32. Film critic James



Down

1. The middle of a donut or bagel
2. "Aida," for example
3. They were "Mad" on AMC
4. Finish
5. Lead-in to 'Miss
6. Billy's common collaborator Ellington, to pals
9. It's the limit?
10. Garden implement
14. Billy's piano teacher Charlotte
15. Disney song refrain (variation)
18. British pilots, initially
19. Female empowerment org.
21. Stitch
23. Actor's job
24. TV legend Linkletter, to pals
25. Lead-in to thermal
26. Partner of the id
29. UFO pilot
30. Educator's helper, briefly

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