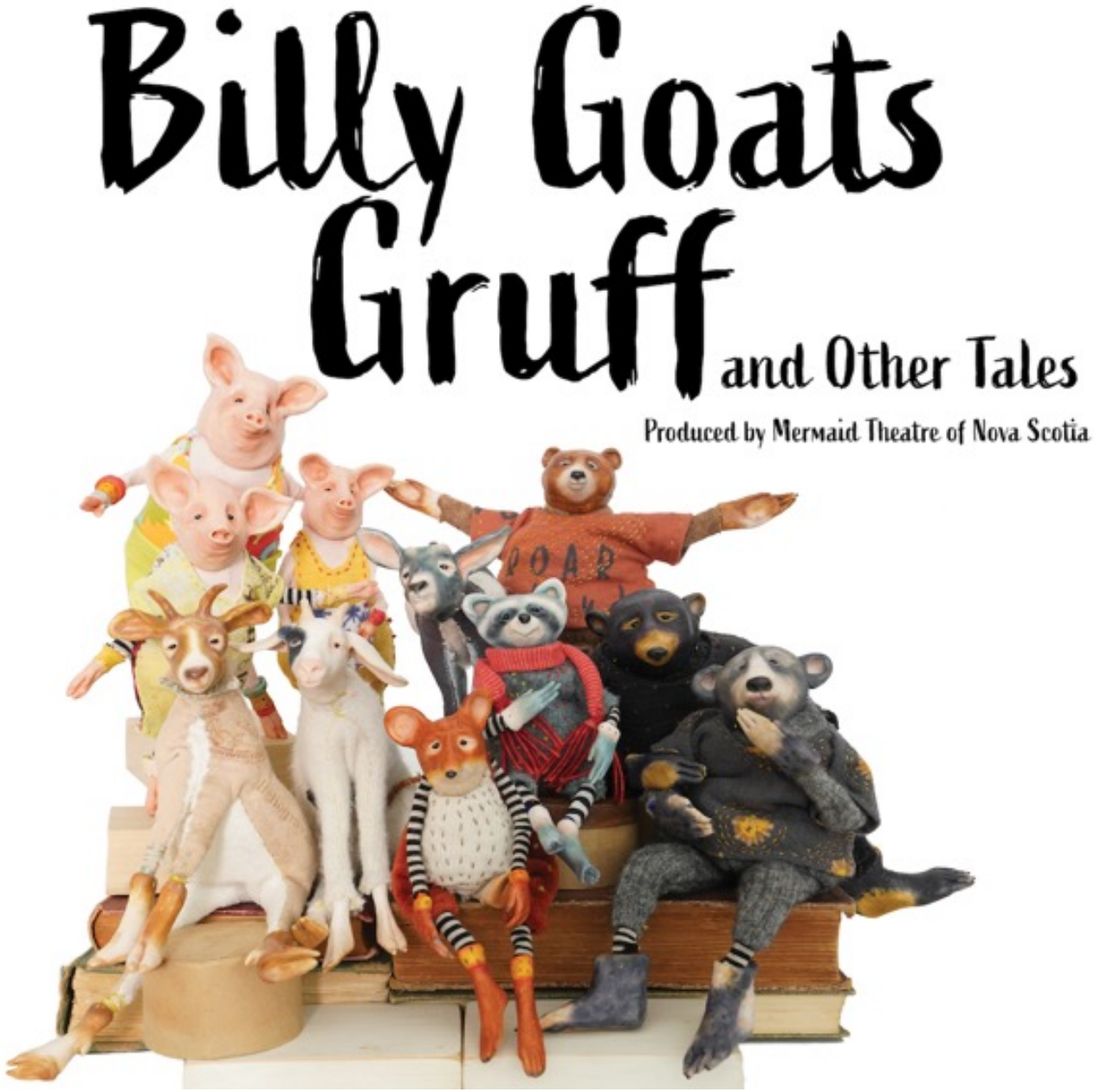
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

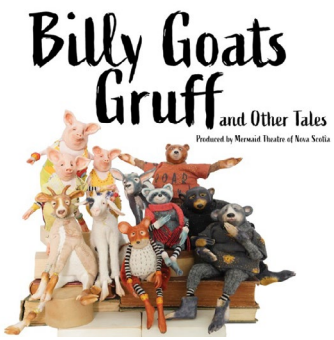
Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales

Grades CD–2

--



ABOUT THE SHOW



Brianna Dykeman, "Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales," Shaw Entertainment Group, accessed May 28, 2026, https://shawentertainment.com/production/billy-goats-gruff-other-tales/.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia's newest production, *Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales*, presents a fresh and engaging reimagining of three cherished children's stories—*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Filled with adventure, humor, and heroism, the story follows a brave raccoon and clever mouse who are on a journey to collect treasure. Along the way, they unknowingly help the bears, pigs, and goats, preventing disaster – without any of the animals ever encountering a true villain. This imaginative retelling seamlessly interweaves three classic tales into a heartwarming adventure that celebrates friendship and courage.

Designed for children ages 3 to 7, Mermaid Theatre's latest production offers a captivating performance, laughter, and wonder for young audiences.[1]

Written by Danny Everson
Director, Set & Puppet Design: Jim Morrow
Music: Chris Luedecke
Sound Design: Joshua Van Tassel
Character Design: Kate Church
Production Manager & Associate Director: Struan Robertson

"Programs," Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia, accessed May 28, 2026, https://mermaidtheatre.ca/programs.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia is an internationally recognized theater company dedicated to bringing children's literature to life through puppetry, movement, music, and visual storytelling. Founded in 1972 in Nova Scotia, Canada, the company was created with the mission of making the arts accessible to young audiences and inspiring a love of reading, imagination, and storytelling.

Known for its innovative use of puppets, masks, and striking visual design, Mermaid Theatre adapts beloved children's books into engaging performances that tour around the world. The company has performed for millions of children across North America and internationally, helping audiences experience stories in new and exciting ways through theater.

In addition to live performances, Mermaid Theatre supports arts education through workshops, digital programming, and community engagement opportunities. The company believes that exposure to literature and the arts helps children develop creativity, confidence, emotional understanding, and a lifelong appreciation for storytelling.
Read more about Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia

WATCH

Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales promo
Photo gallery

1. "*Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales*," Shaw Entertainment Group, accessed May 28, 2026, https://shawentertainment.com/production/billy-goats-gruff-other-tales/.

CONNECT

CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS

Folktale Directors—Create Your Own Skit
Grades 1–2
Students will adapt familiar folktales into short theatrical performances using acting, movement, dialogue, and imagination. Through creating, rehearsing, and performing their own skits, students will explore how traditional folktales can be transformed into performances.
Click here for the workshop

Folktale Animal Puppets
Grades CD–2
Students design and create their own folktale animal puppets inspired by classic stories such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Through visual art and puppet performances, students explore how characters in folktales can come to life.
Click here for the workshop

Folktale Sound Effects
Grades K–2
Students explore how sound effects help enhance a story or performance by creating their own story soundtracks inspired by classic tales such as The *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Students will use instruments and creative sound-making to match characters, settings, and important folktale events.
Click here for workshop

Crossing the Troll Bridge—Norwegian Halling Dance
Grades CD–2
Students explore the traditional Norwegian folk dance, Halling, while learning about the cultural origins of The *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Students will create a "troll bridge" and travel through it using Halling-inspired movements to bring the folktale to life.
Click here for workshop

CONNECT

FOLKTALES

Arthur Rackham, "Hansel and Gretel with the witch," Britannica Kids, accessed May 28, 2026, https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/folktale/605052.

WHAT ARE FOLKTALES?

Folktales are stories that have been passed down from generation to generation through speaking and storytelling. Long before books, movies, or television existed, people shared folktales out loud to entertain, teach lessons, explain the world around them, and preserve traditions and culture.

Folktales often include:

- Talking animals
- Repetition and patterns
- Good vs. bad characters
- Problems to solve
- Important lessons or morals

Because these stories were shared orally for many years, there are often many different versions of the same tale from around the world. As such, they are creations and tales of the "folk," or the people.[2]

WHY DO WE STILL TELL FOLKTALES?

Many folktales are still popular today because they use imagination, humor, adventure, and memorable characters to teach lessons about bravery, kindness, clever thinking, and perseverance.

Folktales continue to inspire:

- Books
- Plays
- Movies
- Music
- Dance performances

2. "Folktale," Britannica Kids, accessed May 28, 2026, https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/folktale/399460.

CONNECT

THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF

AEGN, "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," rubber block print, 2007, August 26, 2014, https://nydamprintsblackandwhite.blogspot.com/2014/08/my-billy-goats-gruff.html.

Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales was inspired by three folktales—*The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

The Three Billy Goats Gruff is a traditional Norwegian folktale about three goats who want to cross a bridge to reach greener grass on the other side. Under the bridge lives a grumpy troll who threatens to eat anyone who tries to cross.

The story follows a familiar folktale pattern:

- Repetition
- Characters of different sizes
- A problem to solve
- A clever ending

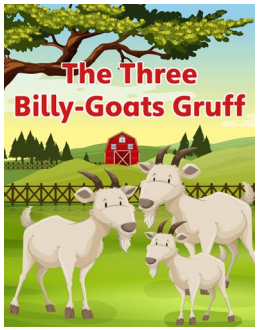
The smallest goats use quick thinking and bravery to outsmart the troll until the biggest goat finally scares the troll away.

Themes to explore:

- Courage
- Teamwork
- Problem-solving
- Facing fears

READ

The Three Billy Goats Gruff



WATCH

The Three Billy Goats Gruff read aloud

CONNECT

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

"The Three Little Pigs," Americanliterature, accessed June 2, 2026, https://americanliterature.com/childrens-stories/the-three-little-pigs.

The Three Little Pigs is one of the most well-known folktales in the world. In the story, three pigs each build a house using different materials:

- Straw
- Sticks
- Bricks

When a wolf tries to blow the houses down, the pigs discover that careful planning and hard work matter.

Themes to explore:

- Preparation
- Responsibility
- Perseverance
- Making wise choices

READ

The Three Little Pigs

WATCH

The Three Little Pigs read aloud

CONNECT

GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS

Elizabeth Tyler, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," Vintage Prints, accessed May 28, 2026, https://vintageprints.net/products/wall-art-fairy-tale-goldilocks-three-bears.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Goldilocks and the Three Bears tells the story of a curious girl named Goldilocks who wanders into the home of three bears.

Inside the house she explores:

- Bowls of porridge
- Chairs
- Beds

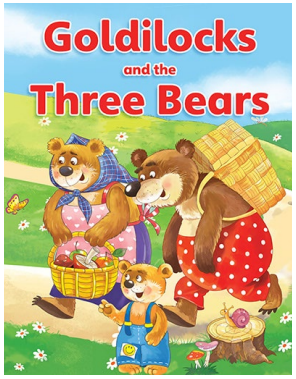
Goldilocks learns that some things can be too big, too small, too hot, or too cold before finally finding things that feel "just right."

Themes to explore:

- Curiosity
- Respect for others
- Choices and consequences
- Comparing sizes and opposites

READ

Goldilocks and the Three Bears



WATCH

Goldilocks and the Three Bears read aloud

All three folktales above also use prediction and repetition, which make them particularly engaging:

- *The Three Billy Goats Gruff: "Who's that trip-trapping over my bridge?"*
- *The Three Little Pigs: "I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down!"*
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears: "Too ___, just right."*

CONNECT

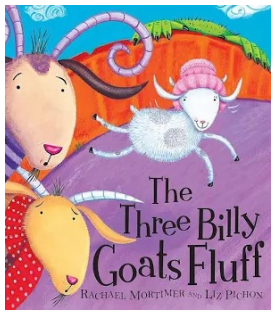
FOLKTALE ADAPTATIONS THROUGH TIME

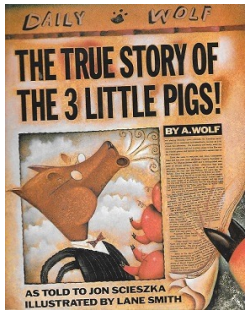
Folktales have been retold for hundreds of years in many different ways. Because these stories are shared across generations, artists, writers, musicians, filmmakers, dancers, and actors often create new versions that reflect different cultures, time periods, and artistic styles.

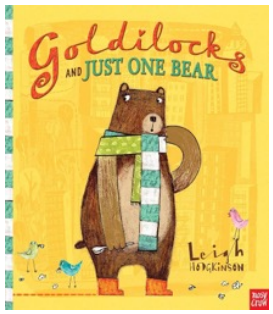
Some versions stay close to the original story, while others add humor, modern settings, new characters, or surprising twists. These adaptations help keep folktales alive and relevant for new audiences.

READ

Adaptations of these folktales







LISTEN

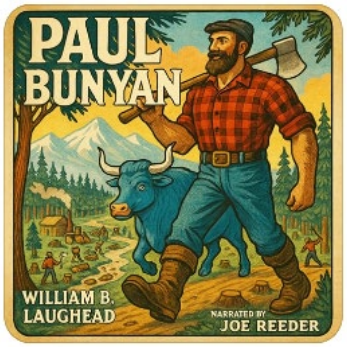
Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

EXPLORE

POPULAR FOLKTALES FROM THE UNITED STATES

Folktales are told in nearly every country and culture around the world. These stories are often passed down orally from one generation to the next and help preserve traditions, values, and history.

Here are some popular folktales you may know from the United States:



"Paul Bunyan," Audible, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.audible.com/pd/Paul-Bunyan-Audiobook/B0FC45L3RG?srsltid=AfmBOopM5GqTh3LD-QFygsmB8Vde2ON5wyJmlZHZ7KlzDlGmljH0cQjk.

Paul Bunyan

Paul Bunyan is a giant lumberjack from American folklore known for his enormous size and strength. Stories say he traveled across North America with his giant blue ox named Babe.

According to legend

- Paul's footsteps created lakes and the Grand Canyon
- His axe carved valleys and rivers
- Babe the Blue Ox helped clear forests

Lessons & themes

- Hard work
- Adventure
- American frontier life
- Exaggeration and imagination

Paul Bunyan stories are examples of tall tales, a special type of folktale that uses unbelievable exaggeration for humor and entertainment.

Deborah Hufford, "The Legend of Johnny Appleseed," Notes from the Frontier (blog), updated May 11, 2023, https://www.notesfromthefrontier.com/post/the-legend-of-johnny-appleseed.

Johnny Appleseed

Johnny Appleseed was inspired by a real person named John Chapman, who traveled across parts of the United States planting apple trees and nurseries.

Stories about Johnny Appleseed describe him as:

- Kind and generous
- A gentle friend to animals and nature
- A traveler who helped communities grow

Lessons & themes

- Caring for nature
- Kindness
- Generosity
- Community

Johnny Appleseed stories are often shared in schools during lessons about nature and American history.

Maroonbeard, "On one of his adventures, Pecos Bill managed to lasso a tornado," Wikimedia Commons, May 25, 2013, https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ah-pecosbill/.

Pecos Bill

Pecos Bill is a legendary cowboy from the American Southwest. Stories say he rode tornadoes and mountain lions, used rattlesnakes as lassos, and could outrun wild animals.

Lessons & themes

- Courage
- Adventure
- Creativity
- Humor

Like many folktales, Pecos Bill stories use exaggeration to make ordinary life seem magical and exciting.

EXPLORE

FOLKTALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

While the settings and characters may differ in folktales from other countries, many of these stories teach similar lessons.[3]

"Little Red Riding Hood," Americanliterature, accessed June 2, 2026, https://americanliterature.com/childrens-stories/little-red-riding-hood

***Little Red Riding Hood* (Europe)**

Little Red Riding Hood is a well-known European folktale about a young girl traveling through the woods to visit her grandmother when she encounters a clever wolf.

The story has been retold for hundreds of years in many different versions.

Lessons & themes
- Listening carefully
- Being cautious
- Courage
- Problem-solving

The story has inspired
- Ballets
- Operas
- Picture books
- Films and animation

Read *The Little Red Riding Hood*

"Jack and the Beanstalk," Americanliterature, accessed June 2, 2026, https://americanliterature.com/childrens-stories/jack-and-the-beanstalk.

***Jack and the Beanstalk* (England)**

Jack and the Beanstalk tells the story of Jack, a boy who climbs a giant beanstalk into a magical world above the clouds.

In the clouds Jack encounters
- A giant
- Magical treasures
- Exciting challenges

Lessons & themes
- Bravery
- Risk-taking
- Clever thinking
- Adventure

The story is frequently adapted into
- Musicals
- Puppet shows
- Pantomime theater
- Children's television programs

Read *Jack and the Beanstalk*

3. Images from folktales around the world taken from: Americanliterature.com, accessed May 28, 2026.

EXPLORE

FOLKTALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

"The Tortoise and the Hare," Americanliterature, accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://americanliterature.com/author/aesop/short-story/the-tortoise-and-the-hare&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1780417813822342&usg=AOvVaw2xKNrudio6Y1DixbFK97Zi.

***The Tortoise and the Hare* (Greece)**

The Tortoise and the Hare is one of the most famous fables from ancient Greece.

In the story

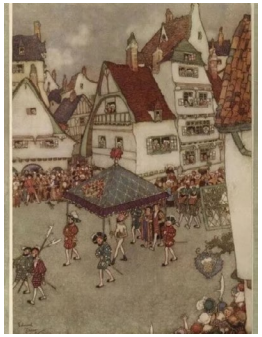
- A fast hare races a slow tortoise
- The hare becomes overconfident
- The tortoise wins through patience and persistence

Lessons & themes

- Perseverance
- Humility
- Patience
- Determination

This simple story is still shared worldwide in classrooms, animation, and storytelling performances.

Read *The Tortoise and the Hare*



"The Emperor's New Clothes," Americanliterature, accessed June 2, 2026, https://americanliterature.com/author/hans-christian-andersen/short-story/the-emperors-new-clothes

***The Emperor's New Clothes* (Denmark)**

The Emperor's New Clothes, by Hans Christian Andersen, tells the story of an emperor tricked into believing he is wearing magical clothes that cannot actually be seen.

Lessons & themes

- Honesty
- Pride
- Speaking the truth
- Critical thinking

The phrase "The emperor has no clothes!" is still used today when people pretend something is true when it is not.

Read *The Emperor's New Clothes*

Performances like *Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales* remind us that folktales are not just stories from the past; they are stories that continue to inspire theater, dance, music, books, and art all around the world today.

READ

More short stories and folktales
Folktales from around the world

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Britannica Kids. “Folktale.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/folktale/399460.

Britannica Kids. “Folktale.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/folktale/605052.

British Council. “*Jack and the Beanstalk*.” Learn English Kids. Accessed May 28, 2026. https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/sites/kids/files/attachment/short-stories-jack-and-the-beanstalk-transcript.pdf.

British Council. “*Little Red Riding Hood*.” Learn English Kids. Accessed May 28, 2026. https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/sites/kids/files/attachment/short-stories-little-red-riding-hood-transcript.pdf.

Buddy Son Storytime. “*The Three Little Pigs* – read aloud.” August 15, 2021. YouTube. 5 minutes. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNYBQsay_Ek.

Buddy Son Storytime. “*Goldilocks and the Three Bears* – read aloud.” September 16, 2022. YouTube. 4 minutes, 4 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnbO6h_yQkg

Encyclopedia Britannica. “Johnny Appleseed.” September 22, 2025. https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Chapman.

Encyclopedia Britannica. “Paul Bunyan.” December 5, 2025. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Paul-Bunyan.

JoJoe Jung Joe. “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?” January 7, 2019. YouTube. 2 minutes, 44 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLh-ZoV0aUI.

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia. “Mission & Mandate.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://mermaidtheatre.ca/mission-and-mandate.

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia. “Programs.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://mermaidtheatre.ca/programs.

Shawn Entertainment Group. “*Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales*.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://shawentertainment.com/production/billy-goats-gruff-other-tales/.

Shaw Entertainment Group. “*Billy Goats Gruff and Other Tales* promo video 60 sec.” Updated October 17, 2025. Vimeo. 1 minute. https://vimeo.com/1128267132?fl=pl&fe=cm.

Storyline Online. “*The Three Billy Goats Gruff*.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://storylineonline.net/books/the-three-billy-goats-gruff/.

World of Tales. “Welcome to the World of Tales.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://www.worldoftales.com/#gsc.tab=0.

World Stories. “*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://worldstories.org.uk/reader/goldilocks-and-the-three-bears/english/245.

World Stories. “*The Three Billy-Goats Gruff*.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://worldstories.org.uk/reader/the-three-billy-goats-gruff/english/254#.

World Stories. “*The Three Little Pigs*.” Accessed May 28, 2026. https://worldstories.org.uk/reader/the-three-little-pigs/english/262.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS

The Gaillard Center would like to thank the following educational partners in their ongoing support of our Education and Community program. This program is also supported, in part, by a grant from a private foundation.

Charleston Gaillard Center Partners

Institutional Support

Corporate Supporters

Small Business Members

Community Partners

Annex Dance Company
Anson Street African Burial Ground Project
Anson Street African Burial Memorial
Blue Bicycle Books
Buxton Books
Charleston County Public Library
Charleston Jazz
Charleston Symphony
College of Charleston
Cuisine Rescue
Dance Conservatory of Charleston
Engaging Creative Minds
Free Verse Festival
HEART
International African American Museum
KultureCity
Lowcountry Jazz Festival/Closing the Gap in Health Care
MOJA Arts Festival
Southeastern Wildlife Exposition
Spoleto Festival USA
We Are Family