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## DeVos Institute of Arts Management Welcomes New Cohort of Executive Fellows

**Nineteen Executives from Nine Countries Will Participate in Arts Management Intensive  
July 8 – August 2, 2024**

WASHINGTON, D.C., United States — The DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland proudly announces the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual cohort of its Global Arts Management Fellowship.

This high-intensity executive training program is led by DeVos Institute of Arts Management Chairman Michael M. Kaiser and President Brett Egan. It admits fewer than 4% of applicants and offers fully-subsidized training, travel, housing, and living support to accomplished leaders of arts, culture, heritage and humanities non-profits worldwide. The three-year program provides each participant three, sequential years of support, introducing a new cohort, and matriculating a returning cohort, each summer.

The Fellowship is designed for individuals who have dedicated themselves to arts administration. Intensive training in strategic planning, leadership, fundraising, marketing, board governance, human resources, and financial planning is coupled with peer learning, networking, and time for personal reflection. It is designed as both a catalyst for leaders at critical points in their careers, as well as a high-touch, long-term investment in a generation of leaders who will support one another, and their fields of service, for a lifetime.

This year's cohort of seven executives – from the United States, Austria, Germany and England – was selected from an applicant pool representing 57 countries. The new fellows will spend a month in residence in Washington, D.C. this July, joining twelve returning fellows from Singapore, Canada, Colombia, Ukraine, Australia, England and the United States.

As they approach their return to the program this summer, returning Fellows reflected on the program, offering:

*"The Fellowship has been an absolute game-changing experience for me. It is intellectually stimulating and soul invigorating."* - Shaza Ishak, Executive & Artistic Director, Teater Ekamatra (Singapore)

*"The Fellowship has been game changing in my thought process and approach. I took an extensive toolkit back to my department and organization that is supporting our transformation through our current challenges."* – Andrew Given, Development Director, English National Opera (London, England)

*"The program is truly a fellowship of like-minded arts leaders who have boots on the ground, visioning and leading some of the most impactful arts programs internationally. Integrating the material covered into one's own organization is a very effective and practical method of instruction, and having a team of peers who are all in the same boat fosters a space where ideas can be shared openly and constructively."* (Rolando Sanz, CEO & Producing Artistic Director, Young Artists of America, Bethesda, Maryland)

Biographies of this year's cohort, as well as those of returning cohorts, follow below.

**2026 Fellowship Cohort  
Will complete the First Year of the Three-Year Program in 2024**

Name	Position	Organization	City	Country
Andrew Hurst	Chief Executive	One Dance UK	Birmingham	England
David Mack	The African American Art & Culture Complex	Managing Director	San Francisco, California	United States
Fiona Stevens	Concerto Köln	Executive Director	Köln	Germany
Holly Herrick	Austin Film Society	Head of Film and Creative Media	Austin, Texas	United States
Mari Robles	Headland Center for the Arts	Executive Director	Sausalito, California	United States
Martina Laab	ORF Radiokulturhaus	Producing & Artistic Director	Vienna	Austria
Robbie Jacobs	Children’s Chorus of Washington	Executive Director	Washington, D.C.	United States

**Andrew Hurst**  
**Birmingham, England**

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2026 Cohort  
Chief Executive, One Dance UK  
[www.onedanceuk.org](http://www.onedanceuk.org)



Andrew Hurst is the Chief Executive of One Dance UK, the national support organisation and advocacy body for dance in the United Kingdom, a role he assumed in 2016. Prior to this role, his management roles included serving as the Company Manager of The Royal Ballet from 2009 to 2016 and leading the Phoenix Dance Theatre in Leeds, first as General Manager, and then Executive Director, from 2008 to 2009.

Hurst’s dance career spans over 30 years, where he first began as a dancer with several renowned dance companies including Basel Ballet, Ballet Gulbenkian, Nederlands Dans Theater, and Rambert Dance Company. He has lived and worked in Switzerland, France, Portugal, Holland, Germany, and the UK, as well as toured the world. Throughout his career, he has worked with organisations of varying sizes, all of whom have faced significant financial challenges and periods of change. Most of this work has been with UK cultural organisations all of whom have an international dimension to their work which has allowed him to build extensive international experience and networks.

Hurst additionally has over 20 years’ experience in board leadership in not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. He is the current Chairman of Company Chameleon and a Board Member of Dance Consortium and AWA Dance charity. He was awarded the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2021 New Year’s Honours list for services to dance, particularly through the Covid-19 response. He has also served as a trustee, chairman or board member for organizations including the Dance Education and Training Board, the Dancers’ Pension Trustees, the Dance Professionals’ Fund, The Hospital Club, and ArtsDepot, among others, where he engaged in change management and governance, as well as pension and investment administration.

In 2009 he toured The Royal Ballet to Cuba – at that time the first international company to do this, with their Cuban Principal Guest Artist Carlos Acosta. This was the beginning of a long and meaningful relationship for Hurst with Cuba and its people. He

has since focused his independent consultancy InterCultura on supporting Cuban artists and companies to develop their international profile and projects.

Hurst has a lifelong love of languages and learning and is passionate about personal and professional development. He is qualified in the use of coaching and psychometrics, and has studied Business with the Open University, Cultural Policy and Management with City University, and leadership with the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Bayes (formerly Cass) Business School and the Clore Leadership Programme. He recently completed a Master's in Business Administration and a postgraduate diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership Practice as part of the Senior Leaders Master's Degree Apprenticeship, a partnership between Arts Connect and Wolverhampton University. He is a fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (FRSA), and of the Chartered Management Institute (FCMI).

### **David Mack**

**San Francisco, California, United States**

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2026 Cohort

Managing Director, The African American Art & Culture Complex

<https://aaacc.org/>



David Mack is the Managing Director of the African American Arts & Culture Complex, San Francisco's largest community-based Cultural Center. Over the past 15 years, Mack has managed some of California's most innovative performing arts organizations, including: Joe Goode Performance Group, The Industry and Watts Village Theater Company. During his tenure as Managing Director of Watts Village Theater Company, Mack produced four annual Meet Me @Metro festivals, featuring dozens of immersive, cultural performances on and along Metro trains and stations, storefronts and public spaces throughout East and South Los Angeles. Through Meet Me @Metro, Mack established partnerships with national funders, corporations, local vendors, government municipalities and collaborating performing arts ensembles.

Mack's inaugural project as a Producer and Co-Founder was Chocolate City, an industry showcase connecting BIPOC writers and performers from institutions across Southern California to Hollywood agents, managers and casting directors. Since then, he has served on the Boards and committee leadership of several arts organizations, including: the San Francisco Arts Alliance and Western Arts Alliance.

Mack is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) as well as a member of WESTAF's Greater Bay Area Arts & Cultural Advocacy Coalition. Mack is the Co-Founder of Theatre Magnet, Artist Magnet and Artist Magnet Justice Alliance - Oakland-based arts service organizations. As a Strategic Consultant, Mack's clients have included the City of West Hollywood, Center Theatre Group and LA Dance Project.

**Fiona Stevens**  
Köln, Germany

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2026 Cohort

Executive Director, Concerto Köln

[www.concerto-koeln.de](http://www.concerto-koeln.de)



Fiona Stevens assumed the position of Executive Director of Concerto Köln, one of Germany's internationally acclaimed Historically Informed Performance orchestras, in February 2022.

Prior to this role her career focused on performance as a freelance violinist as well as an educator and manager. She was a member of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique for 11 years, with concert performances taking her to major venues in Europe and the USA. She studied musicology at Trinity College Cambridge, violin in Düsseldorf and Historically Informed Performance in Frankfurt am Main and Den Haag.

Stevens is convinced that music can change society for the better and completed a PhD on that subject at the University of Southampton in 2017. She lectures in the department of Social Work at the University of Applied Science in Darmstadt, teaching music in the context of social work with a particular focus on increasing participation for non-music experts in the creative musical process by making it as accessible as possible. She is currently completing a Master's in Business Administration in Arts Innovation at the Global Leaders Institute.

**Holly Herrick**  
Austin, Texas, United States

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2026 Cohort

Head of Film and Creative Media, Austin Film Society

[www.austinfilm.org](http://www.austinfilm.org)



Holly Herrick is a seasoned executive in the non-profit film sector. As Head of Film and Creative Media at the Austin Film Society (AFS), she has played a key role in the organization's expansion since 2012, leading program development, marketing & communications, and strategic planning alongside AFS CEO Rebecca Campbell. Strongly rooted in the art of film, Holly is passionate about AFS's mission to empower the community to Make, Watch and Love Film and Creative Media. She has led the administration of nearly \$2M in grant funds to Texas filmmakers and established successful talent development programs that have launched film careers. In 2017, AFS opened the AFS Cinema, Austin's first and only non-profit art house cinema.

Herrick's background is in film festival programming and independent film production. She serves on the advisory board of SXSW Film & TV and has contributed programming to major international events including AFS retrospectives at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival (2018), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (as part of their 2019 Richard Linklater exhibit), and the Premiers Plans Festival in Angers, France (2015-2018). She has held programming leadership roles at the Sarasota Film Festival, the Hamptons International Film Festival, and the Newport International Film Festival. Active in the film community, she has served as a juror, moderator and panelist with festivals and industry convenings including the Film Independent Spirit Awards, SXSW festival and conference, Sundance Film Festival, Arthouse Convergence, IndieMemphis Film Festival, Denver International Film Festival, Florida Film Festival, aGLIFF, School of Visual Arts NYC, and The Gotham (NYC). She was a recipient of the 2023 Sarasota Film Festival Award, honored along with Tom Hall for foundational contributions to the festival at its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. She also served on the steering committee of the City of Austin's Building Austin's Creative Capacity Project.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts from New College of Florida, and completed additional studies at Sorbonne Paris III and New York University.

**Mari Robles**

**Sausalito, California, United States**

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2026 Cohort

Executive Director, Headland Center for the Arts

[www.headlands.org](http://www.headlands.org)



Mari Robles is an arts leader, cultural practitioner and organizer guided by a mission to connect all people to quality arts education and leverage the power of culture and art as engines for affecting systemic change. Since 2020, she has served as Executive Director at Headlands Center for the Arts, a multidisciplinary residency and arts center located in Golden Gate National Park, where she leads the Center's deep commitment to the creative process for artists and the public.

Previously, Robles worked at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in Education, Public Engagement and Creative Practice, implementing artists and scholarly programming and establishing impactful and lasting partnerships between the Museum and its broad and diverse community stakeholders. In this role, she collaborated with the Education Trustee Committee and Museum Directors to develop and implement key engagement initiatives including the Collaborative on Creative Practice and Social Justice, the Civic Practice Partnership, and the Advisory Committee on Cultural Engagement. Prior to this role, she served as the Deputy Director of Education and Public Programs at the Pérez Art Museum Miami and has held leadership roles at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the DreamYard Art Center in the Bronx. In all her roles, Robles has crafted 21<sup>st</sup> century museum experiences with progressive approaches to pedagogy and engagement that support people, constituents, and broad networks of partners at the service of sustainable community-building, dialogue, civic participation, and social change.

She holds a Master's degree from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in art education and studied art history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She completed the Executive Development program through a partnership with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Columbia Business School, and was a member of the 2015 NexGen cohort with the Getty's Museum Leadership Institute. She has served as a speaker and panelist with the National Art Educator Association (recipient of the 2015 President's Award), the New England Arts Education Association, Open Engagement, NLS Kingston, and the Miami Dade Country Art Educators Association, and has published work with the Miami Rail and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Martina Laab**  
**Vienna Austria**

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2026 Cohort

Producing and Artistic Director, ORF Radiokulturhaus

<https://radiokulturhaus.orf.at>



Martina Laab is an arts professional with over twenty years' experience in programming and producing cultural events in Austria and abroad. As a producer, artistic administrator, curator, or project manager, her goals are always to inspire discovery, uncover connections, and show how cultural engagement can be a rich part of anyone's life.

She is currently Producing and Artistic Director at the ORF RadioKulturhaus where she is responsible for programming, production & education, strategy, financial leadership of its artistic and production departments, and the collaboration with the Austrian National Public Radio & TV. As an arts organization, the ORF RadioKulturhaus's goal has always been to highlight and showcase artistic excellence and outstanding performances whilst creating on Air content for the National Public Radio and TV programming.

Prior to this role, she worked as the Deputy Director of the Ernst Krenek Forum in Krems (Austria) where her duties included strategic, artistic, and administrative tasks. She previously served as the Head of the Music and Performance Department at the Austrian Cultural Forum New York, where she was responsible for all music & performance programs at the Forum as well as for budgeting and staffing. Laab's early career included roles in arts administration, booking & producing concerts for Joe Zawinul's jazz club.

Besides her work as an arts administrator and producer, Laab is a board member and advisor for the Salam Music Festival, a 10-day music & arts festival featuring music & culture from the Middle Eastern regions in Vienna. Driven by her lifelong love of music, she launched the Austrian World Music Awards, a nationwide music competition (2014 & 2015). Furthermore, she is a Juror at some international and national music competitions & awards such as RUTH (Germany), NASOM (New Austrian Sound of Music) and German Record Critics' Prize (Germany).

Laab studied communications, political science, and history at the University of Vienna, followed by a post-graduate study at the Lincoln Center in New York.

**Robbie Jacobs**  
**Washington D.C., United States**

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2026 Cohort

Executive Director, Children's Chorus of Washington  
[www.childrenschorusdc.org](http://www.childrenschorusdc.org)



Robbie Jacobs brings a wealth of experience and passion to his role as Executive Director at the Children's Chorus of Washington. With a distinguished career spanning prestigious youth chorus organizations in the United States and United Kingdom, including the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, London Youth Choir, and most recently, the Boston Children's Chorus, Robbie has consistently championed the cause of providing top-tier music education to any young person who wants it, irrespective of financial circumstances.

At the core of Jacobs's professional story is a steadfast commitment to breaking down barriers to musical and vocal education. As a Teach First Ambassador (the UK's equivalent of Teach for America) and through his tenure in various educational roles, he has worked to address educational disparities in music, ensuring that talent and passion are the only prerequisites for participation.

Beyond his administrative endeavors, Jacobs is a dynamic performing artist. As the founder and Artistic Director of the contemporary vocal ensemble, Reverie, and a member of the acclaimed GRAMMY-nominated Skylark Vocal Ensemble, he brings his artistry to stages across the globe. Additionally, Jacobs shares his expertise as a sought-after choral clinician, and is in demand on both sides of the Atlantic.

Jacobs' journey began as the Senior Choral Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, followed by a Master's in Choral Conducting from the Royal Academy of Music. Hailing from the United Kingdom, his cultural influences extend beyond music – he is an avid football (soccer) fan, and a fearless chef.



**2025 Fellowship Cohort  
Will complete the Second Year of the Three-Year Program in 2024**

Name	Position	Organization	City	Country
Alison Nadebaum	Director People & Culture	Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra	Hobart, Tasmania	Australia
Andrew Given	Director of Development	English National Opera	London	England
Bozhena Pelenska	Executive & Artistic Director	Jam Factory Art Center	Lviv	Ukraine
Claudia de Vasco	Managing Director	Miller Outdoor Theatre	Houston, Texas	United States
Cody Chen	General Manager	Joffrey Ballet	Chicago, Illinois	United States
Rolando Sanz	CEO & Producing Artistic Director	Young Artists of America	Bethesda, Maryland	United States
Shaza Ishak	Executive & Artistic Director	Teater Ekamatra	Singapore	Singapore

**Alison Nadebaum**  
**Hobart, Tasmania, Australia**

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 2025 Cohort  
Director, People & Culture, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra  
[www.tso.com.au](http://www.tso.com.au)



Alison Nadebaum has operated at the sweet spot where art, business and creative people intersect for nearly 20 years across the Australian arts sector. She is currently Director People & Culture at the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, one of the most loved and prized institutions on the island of lutruwita / Tasmania, commencing at the TSO in 2021 to deliver an ambitious values-driven cultural change program as part of the orchestra's ten-year organisational strategy *Our Cathedral*.

Alison's early career included roles in arts administration, finance, and producing in the small-to-medium Western Australian theatre sector. Over her subsequent decade at Sydney Opera House, Alison held specialist roles in project and event management, ticketing, and stakeholder events, before leading the business management and event operations for the Opera House's internal programming and producing department for five years. Joining the senior team responsible for delivering major business transformation, she was then appointed the inaugural Chief Operating Officer position at State Opera South Australia.

Alison studied Arts Management at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and holds a Master of Business Administration with a Human Resources specialisation from the Australian Institute of Management. She is the proud Chairperson of Outback Theatre for Young People, serving young people across an area of 30,000 square kilometres (roughly the size of Belgium) in regional south-west NSW and is a peer assessor for state and federal arts funding administered via Arts Tasmania and the Australia Council, with a focus on multi-arts projects and regional touring.

**Andrew Given**  
**London, England**

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 2025 Cohort  
Director of Development, English National Opera  
[www.eno.org](http://www.eno.org)



Andrew Given is the Director of Development at the English National Opera, where he leads a team of 15 fundraisers that generate £4 million of philanthropic income per year to support opera productions, capital projects, talent development and learning & engagement programmes. He is a member of the leadership that is creating the new artistic and business plan for the ENO relocate to a new, primary base, outside of London.

Andrew is also Deputy Chair of Tara Theatre, a company championing South Asian voices and artists; a senior mentor with the Chartered Institute of Fundraising Arts & Culture programme, and a Fellow of the Royal Society for Arts. Prior to serving in an administrative capacity in the performing arts sector, Andrew taught key stage 3, GCSE and A-Level Music within secondary schools for 11 years in Liverpool and London.

**Bozhena Pelenska**  
**Lviv, Ukraine**

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 2025 Cohort  
Executive and Artistic Director, Jam Factory Art Center  
<https://jamfactory.ua>



Bozhena Pelenska is Executive and Artistic Director of Jam Factory Art Center, a contemporary art institution that takes a critical stance towards global and local social processes and represents and supports artists and art professionals who show active social and political interest in their particular circumstances. Founded by the historian and cultural entrepreneur Harald Binder, it serves as a platform for international cultural and artistic collaboration by holding discussions on the most relevant artistic and philosophical ideas and phenomena, raising issues of societal importance, and initiating interaction and exchange between artists, cultural professionals, and visitors of all ages. It is in the process of opening an interdisciplinary center in the revitalized space of Jam Factory premises. It is a part of the international cultural scene due to its extensive network of partnerships, but primarily, focuses on presenting, developing, and exploring Ukrainian and East European art. Further, it plans to increase its research potential by forming a pool of curators and

theorists through educational programs in order to subsequently carry out its own research projects, produce knowledge, and participate in composing contemporary art history.

Prior to this role, she served as the Director of Harald Binder Cultural Enterprises where she managed the revitalization process, led legal and operations efforts, and designed and launched the HBCE Grant Program. Previous roles from 2011 to 2016 include: Director of the Cultural Industries Association, where she designed and led the “Revitalization of Industrial Buildings in Ukraine” project; designer and leader of “80Times Lodz”, a cultural and community project in the frames of the Art Incubator Project of Fabryka Sztuki in Lodz, Poland; manager of the International Paderewski Festival in Lviv, a festival of jazz and academic music; and project manager for the Center for Cultural Management where she organized the Ukraine-Moldova-EU Exchange Program (in cooperation with the European Cultural Foundation), managed the artistic presentation in Moldova of the TANDEM European Festival, and managed a Residency Program for Culture Managers. From 2007 to 2009, she served as a Manager in the Culture and Tourism Department of the Lviv City Council, where she developed of the First City Grant Program, developed programs and managed city festivals including the International Dance Festival Ethnovyr, International Music Festival, and City Festival of Coffee, and prepared Lviv’s official representation in the International Tourism Exhibition WTM, London, GB, International Tourism Exhibition in Vienna.



She has a Masters in Cultural Studies from Ivan Franko National University (Lviv, Ukraine), a certificate from the Institute for Non-Profit Management (Lviv, Ukraine), a Masters from Ottawa University and Saint Paul University (Ottawa, Canada) and a Bachelors from the Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv, Ukraine).

### **Claudia de Vasco**

**Houston, Texas, United States**

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 2025 Cohort

Managing Director, Miller Outdoor Theatre

[www.milleroutdoortheatre.com](http://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com)



Claudia de Vasco's career as an Arts manager, creative, and industry change-maker has been navigated by her mission to transform communities through arts and culture, and to continue the legacy of storytelling as an integral part of the human experience, for entertainment, advocacy, education, inspiration, and connection. She has spent the last two decades working in the US and abroad.

She is currently the Managing Director at Miller Outdoor Theatre, leading the nonprofit, Miller Outdoor Theatre Advisory Board. She is also a Collaborator with Creative Evolutions, is an ecosystem of human-centered thinkers, innovators, and collaborators operating in the cultural and creative industries, and continues to work as a consultant and creative in the theater industry. She worked as the Executive Artistic Director of The Public Theater of San Antonio, serving as the first Latine leader in the theater's 100-year history. Prior to this position she launched the Department of Cultural Integrity at BrickHouse as an effort to legitimize and advocate for cultural workers in the Arts. She led Emerging Arts Leader/LA as Managing Director and led the organization through a merging process with Arts for LA, solidifying her work as an arts leader and mentor. Prior to her trajectory in arts management, she worked as a creative in theater, tv, and film, which included over a decade-long career of teaching acting and accents in Hollywood, Theatre, and Academia with clients ranging from celebrities to young artists. Her experience working in politics/government, community organizing, and marketing has informed her work as a change-maker, leader, and advocate in American theatre. Claudia is a new member of the Board of Directors for Texans for the Arts. She is a member of activist group The Kilroys, NAMT Festival of New Musicals Committee Member, AEA, SAG/AFTRA, and a San Antonio Area Foundation Equity Fellow.

She was named one of the 100 Influential Texans to Know by American Business Journals, as one of 25 leaders in Houston in 2024 and one of 25 leaders in San Antonio in 2022. She was a Jerome Foundation Many Voices Fellow in 2006 and the first Latine graduate of the Guthrie Theatre/U of MN training program. Claudia is a proud Tejana, first generation Mexican-American, and mother of two, a lived experience that not only informs the purpose and values in her work, but also reflects the style she brings to arts leadership.

### **Cody Chen**

**Chicago, Illinois, United States**

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 2025 Cohort

General Manager, Joffrey Ballet

<https://joffrey.org>



Oriented in relationship-building and growth, Cody Chen leads the Joffrey Ballet as General Manager, where he is responsible for strategy, financial leadership, and business administration of its artistic and production departments. Since assuming the role in 2022, the company has produced record-setting programs at the Lyric Opera House, collaborated with Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and toured to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In partnership with the Joffrey Academy of Dance and the Museum of Contemporary Arts of Chicago, Cody led the expansion of the Joffrey's Winning Works program, a choreographic competition showcasing original and innovative works from emerging African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American dancemakers. His work with the Joffrey's Community Engagement program produced *Rita Finds Home*, a co-production between the

Joffrey Ballet and Miami City Ballet. This family-friendly and free program, which premiered at Chicago's Navy Pier, continues to bring vibrant dance storytelling to neighborhoods across Chicago and Miami.

Prior to his appointment at the Joffrey, Cody managed international dance and theatre tours in Asia, Europe, and the Americas for companies including Armitage Gone! Dance, Trisha Brown Dance Company, Dance Heginbotham, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Bebe Miller Company, Elisa Monte Dance Company, Mark Morris Dance Group, Parsons Dance, Helen Simoneau Danse, Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai, Yin Mei Dance, IMG Artists, Ping Pong Productions, Asia Society, The Apollo Theater, L.A. Theatreworks, Manhattan School of Music Opera Division, and Millbrook Playhouse. He also previously served as Associate Production Manager at Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis; Production Stage Manager at Alonzo King LINES Ballet in San Francisco; and Project Manager at Theatreworks (Singapore) in Singapore.

Born in Xiamen, China, he holds a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature from Xiamen University in China.

### **Rolando Sanz**

**Bethesda, Maryland, United States**

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 2025 Cohort

CEO & Producing Artistic Director, Young Artists of America

[www.youngartistsamerica.org](http://www.youngartistsamerica.org)



Rolando Sanz is a visionary performing arts executive who works at the crossroads of the industry, bridging arts administration, production, education, and performance. With over two decades of experience in the field, he is a proven collaborator with a true multidisciplinary perspective and a reputation as an unflappable, hands-on leader.

Rolando has been the CEO & Producing Artistic Director for Young Artists of America (YAA) at Strathmore for the past decade, overseeing both the administrative and artistic operations of the nonprofit organization. His principal responsibilities include: global strategic planning, artistic programming, facilities management for multiple venues, fundraising and donor relations, master budget creation and oversight, fiscal reporting and annual audit, board development, and the recruitment and administration of over 80 staff members. As a result of his leadership, YAA continues to flourish and has quickly become one of the leading collaborative arts education organizations in the region.

With a specialized expertise in large-scale, multidisciplinary stage and television works, Rolando has been responsible for numerous innovative and successful productions, in collaboration with some of the leading performing arts venues in the region. In 2016, he commissioned and executive produced the world-premiere of a new concept opera by Broadway creative

Andrew Lipka called *I Am Anne Hutchinson / I Am Harvey Milk*, starring Kristin Chenoweth at the Music Center at Strathmore. In 2017, he commissioned and executive produced a world-premiere television program with Maryland Public Television (PBS) called *The Circle of Life: The Songs of Tim Rice*, curated by Sir Tim Rice himself, which won an Emmy® award in 2018. Additional important regional productions helmed by Sanz include *Songs for a New World* with Jason Robert Brown, *Children of Eden* with Stephen Schwartz, as well as genre-bending premieres of *West Side Story + Roméo et Juliette* and *Madama Butterfly & Miss Saigon*.

Rolando also successfully navigated the pivot of all arts programming at YAA during the global pandemic to include a full array of virtual instruction as well as overseeing 14 complete digital productions in 2020-2021, including full film productions of Sondheim's *Into the Woods* and Duke Ellington's *Sophisticated Ladies*, the latter of which was in collaboration with six leading regional arts organizations from traditionally under resourced populations.

Besides his impactful work as an arts administrator and producer, Rolando has also had the privilege of performing as a principal artist for over a decade with some of the nation's leading symphonies and opera companies, including The Metropolitan Opera (NYC), Carnegie Hall (NYC), Michigan Opera Theatre (Detroit), Spoleto Festival USA (SC), Florentine Opera (Milwaukee), Virginia Opera, Pacific Symphony (CA), Princeton Festival (NJ), as well as with most of the DC region's performing arts organizations.

With a passion for arts education, Rolando has taught on the faculty of various arts training programs, including Teatro Nuovo (NYC), American University (DC), and Bel Canto in Tuscany (Italy). Rolando is a graduate of the Yale University School of Music, has sung the national anthem for the Baltimore Orioles Opening Day ceremonies since 2012, and currently serves as a judge for the Helen Hayes Awards.

**Shaza Ishak**  
**Singapore**

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 2025 Cohort  
Executive & Artistic Director, Teater Ekamatra  
<https://ekamatra.org.sg>



Shaza Ishak is the executive & artistic director of Teater Ekamatra, where she leads the company's strategy and vision and serves as the lead producer of its suite of artistic works. She believes in effecting social change through the art of storytelling on stage and is committed to forging progress for the ethnic minority arts scene and communities in Singapore and beyond.

Teater Ekamatra is dedicated to spotlighting and advancing artists of diverse ethnicities by creating engaging works that inspire, incubating emerging talent, and expanding diversity within the industry. Teater Ekamatra has been commissioned by notable international arts festivals and has won numerous accolades, including at Singapore's highest platform for excellence in theatre, the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards, where its awards have included Best Original Script several times.

In 2019, she graduated from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (UK) with an MA in Creative Producing with a triple scholarship, including the National Arts Council Singapore Postgraduate Scholarship. She is a fellow of the Singapore International Foundation's Arts for Good Fellowship; the International Society for the Performing Arts (USA); and the Eisenhower Fellowship (USA), the youngest fellow in its 68-year history. In 2021, she was conferred the inaugural Tunas Warisan (Special Mention Award) by the President of Singapore, in acknowledgment of her work in the Arts and Heritage sector. Most recently, she was awarded the Chevening Scholarship by the UK's FCDO and is currently pursuing a second Masters, this time in Race, Media, and Social Justice at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

**2024 Fellowship Cohort  
Will complete the Third Year of the Three-Year Program in 2024**

Name	Position	Organization	City	Country
Alexis Spieldenner	Co-Founder & Executive Director	Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts	Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario	Canada
Jorge Silva	Managing Director	Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts at Northwestern University	Chicago, Illinois	United States
María Catalina Prieto Vásquez	Executive Director	Orquesta Filarmónica de Medellín	Medellín	Colombia
Scott Watson	Director of Cultural Affairs	City of Charleston, Office of Cultural Affairs	Charleston, South Carolina	United States
Sydney Liggett-Denis	Executive Director	A.I.M. by Kyle Abraham	Brooklyn, New York	United States

**Alexis Spieldenner**

**Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada**

3<sup>rd</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort

Co-Founder and Executive Director, Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts

[www.bravoniagara.org](http://www.bravoniagara.org)



Alexis Spieldenner is Co-Founder and Executive Director of Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts based in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Driven by an entrepreneurial spirit and lifelong love of music, Alexis founded Bravo Niagara! in 2014 with her mother Christine Mori, who serves as Artistic Director. A not-for-profit organization led by “two women dreamers” (Toronto Star), Bravo Niagara! presents and produces transformative concert experiences and multidisciplinary programming featuring today’s leading artists from across Canada and around the world.

Dedicated to amplifying underrepresented voices through the arts, Alexis produces the annual Voices of Freedom Festival. She is currently Co-Creator and Producer of Bravo Niagara!’s newly commissioned ballet Kimiko’s Pearl, inspired by her family’s story and the Japanese Canadian internment experience during WWII. She is the recipient of

Ontario’s 2016 Lincoln M. Alexander Award, presented by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, for her leadership in eliminating racial discrimination and promoting positive social change.

Alexis is a Fellow of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management. She currently serves on the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre Board of Directors and Ontario Creates’ Music Industry Advisory Committee. She holds a bachelor’s degree in International Comparative Studies from Duke University, where she graduated with high distinction.

**Jorge Silva**  
**Chicago, Illinois, United States**

3<sup>rd</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort

Managing Director, Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts at Northwestern University

<https://wirtz.northwestern.edu>



Jorge Silva is a writer/performer, producer, and the Managing Director for Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts at Northwestern University. Prior to this role, Silva was the Managing Director for The Neo-Futurists in Chicago, Illinois. He earned a dual degree in Government and Theatre (Advanced Undergraduate Theatre Program) at Cornell University's College of Arts & Sciences. He is currently a Neubauer Civic Scholar and MBA Candidate at The University of Chicago Booth School of Business, concentrating on General Management, Behavior Science, and Economics. Silva is also an alum of the inaugural WESTAF-Arts Midwest Leaders of Color Fellowship (2023).

He previously served as the Producing Coordinator for the Goodman Theatre, a producorial role liaising for community engagement projects and the curation of artistic programming; the Production Manager for the Smithsonian Institution's Discovery Theater in Washington, D.C.; and as a founding teaching artist for the District of Columbia Public Schools' in-school arts education program, 'Tools of Discovery.' Silva is also an Artistic Affiliate with Teatro Travesio (Wooster, OH) and the Executive Artistic Director for Pivot Arts (Chicago, IL).

Silva is also a freelance writer and essayist, however, much of Silva's work, however, is identified with The Neo-Futurists beginning as a 2016 recipient of the Artists of Color Scholarship. From there, he joined the experimental essay show THE ARROW (Kurt Chiang, Lily Mooney) and was the lighting designer for REMEMBER THE ALAMO (Nick Hart). Silva has been nominated for a Chicago Latino Network Award and several Alliance for Latinx Theatre Artists of Chicago Awards.

Outside of theatre, Silva has been an Affinity Group Leader for the Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund's mentoring program and, similarly, was a Career Coach with the The Posse Foundation: Chicago. He was a Lecturer at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's Writing Program and an advisor for graduate projects. Notably, Silva was a featured speaker at Latinos Progresando's flagship community event, MEX talks [2018], and continues to serve as a member of the event's Host Committee.

**María Catalina Prieto**  
**Medellin, Columbia**

3<sup>rd</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort

Executive Director, Medellin Philharmonic Orchestra

<https://filarmed.org>



María Catalina Prieto is Executive Director of the Medellin Philharmonic Orchestra, the only privately-run self-sustainable professional Orchestra in Colombia. In this role, she has led the creation of new programs such as education Programs for rural areas; the Coro Reconciliación, a choir made of former participants of the Colombian armed conflict; Música por la vida, a program that brings music to the hospitals; as well as the collaboration with soloists from the Top 5 Orchestras of the world according to Gramophone Magazine.

Before moving to Medellin, she worked at the Bogota Philharmonic Orchestra where she helped create the youth orchestras system providing a first income for approximately 200 talented young musicians and singers aged 18-26, as well as the education program that now benefits more than 20,000 kids and youth from all over the city with music education.

Previous experiences include serving as Cultural Affairs Specialist at the United States Embassy in Colombia where she developed several programs such as Tu Voz Cuenta, a joint venture with USAID and NAS to use Hip Hop



as a tool to address gangs and illegal groups recruitment with at-risk youth in eleven cities across the country. She has also worked as General Manager of the America Cantat 7 Festival and at the International Center for Choral Music where she worked as project manager for the World Youth Choir, Namur en chœurs and several other choir-related multicultural projects.

María Catalina received a Bachelor in Music for Universidad de los Andes as well as a Master in Arts Administration from Barcelona University and a Certificate in Corporate Social Responsibility from EAN University in Bogotá, Colombia.

### **Scott Watson**

**Charleston, South Carolina, United States**

3<sup>rd</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort

Director of Cultural Affairs, City of Charleston

[www.charleston-sc.gov/198/Office-of-Cultural-Affairs](http://www.charleston-sc.gov/198/Office-of-Cultural-Affairs)



Scott Watson is an arts and communications professional with over twenty-five years' experience producing and advancing public appreciation of cultural events, having worked in close coordination with artists and arts organizations across a range of disciplines and scale.

As Director of Cultural Affairs for the City of Charleston, Scott leads a team of nine full-time employees charged with producing large-scale events (Piccolo Spoleto, MOJA Arts Festival), facilitating citywide public celebrations (Holiday Magic in Historic Charleston), and managing ongoing initiatives that enrich the community's quality of life (Charleston Farmers Market, City Gallery at Waterfront Park). The Office of Cultural Affairs additionally serves as an advocate and resource for regional arts constituents, and publishes a comprehensive online and print calendar to cultural attractions in Charleston. A member of the City's senior staff, Scott is responsible for guiding policy and advising the Mayor and executive office on issues impacting the creative sector and local artists.

Before moving to Charleston in January 2013, Scott was Marketing Director of Gluckman Mayner Architects, a New York City-based architectural practice specializing in spaces for the creation and exhibition of art. Scott has previously worked for the Brooklyn Academy of Music and New York Theatre Workshop, and from 2001 to 2003, he was based in Ireland as Executive Producer of the Dublin Fringe Festival.

In the late 1990s, Scott worked with a varied roster of cultural and not-for-profit clients while an Account Executive at a boutique public relations firm, The Kreisberg Group, where his projects included national media campaigns for the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, The New 42nd Street/New Victory Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, Signature Theatre Company, Aaron Davis Hall/Harlem Stage, and the renovation of Grand Central Terminal.

As a consultant and freelance publicist, Scott has worked on the planning and communications management of public events for The New York Times (Arts & Leisure Weekend, TimesTalks, Great Read in the Park) and for American tours by international performing arts ensembles and companies including the Bolshoi Ballet (Moscow), Gate Theatre (Dublin), Druid (Galway), and Théâtre de la Ville (Paris), with productions visiting venues and festivals including Spoleto Festival USA, Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Shakespeare Theatre Company, and The Kennedy Center. In addition to his undergraduate degree from Wesleyan University, Scott holds a Masters of Arts in Eastern Classics from St. Johns College in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



**Sydney Liggett-Dennis**  
**Brooklyn, New York, United States**

3<sup>rd</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort  
Executive Director, A.I.M by Kyle Abraham  
<http://aimbykyleabraham.org/>



Sydney Liggett-Dennis is the Executive Director of A.I.M by Kyle Abraham, NY-based dance company founded by Artistic Director and MacArthur “Genius” Fellow Kyle Abraham. She joined A.I.M in 2019 and in a short time, she has re-organized the operations teams, re-set the strategic direction, and implemented operational efficiencies for a more agile organizational flow. In 2021, Sydney was selected for Cause Effective's inaugural program for Executive Directors: *Focus on Fundraising*, building bridges across race, gender, experience within a cohort setting for peer learning.

Sydney's 10 years of experience in arts administration, management, and programming includes her previous position as the Director of Programs at Dance/USA where she activated the national network of dancers, choreographers and dance administrators through meaningful programs, networking, and educational opportunities. This included the production and curation of the organization's signature event, the Dance/USA Annual Conference.

Prior to her time at Dance/USA, Sydney served as School Director of The School at the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, New York. As School Director, Sydney designed and managed many new programming initiatives. Among them, she created a curated Guest Artist Series to provide teens and adults exposure to the nation's most prominent artists, along with an annual teacher audition process to address the lack of diversity in the teaching staff. Under Sydney's leadership, overall student enrollment increased significantly as she additionally provided guidance and support to countless students, staff, interns, and teaching artists.

Previous positions in non-profit include School Assistant of the Mark Morris Dance Center, Education Assistant and Programs Coordinator of Dance New Amsterdam, and member of Dance/NYC's 2015-2016 Junior Committee. Sydney has also worked in corporate America, providing client services to senior executives in biotech and pharmaceutical industries; connecting them with prominent thought-leaders for direct mentorship and counsel. Sydney is a Magna Cum Laude graduate from The Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance and a minor in Communications. Her enthusiasm as a performer has never wavered and for quite some time, she enjoyed dancing for various choreographers on the East Coast.

### **About the DeVos Institute of Arts Management**

The DeVos Institute of Arts Management provides training, consultation, and implementation support for arts managers and their boards.

It operates on the premise that while much is spent to train artists, too little is spent to support the managers and boards who keep those artists at work.

At the same time, rapid changes in technology, demographics, government policy, and the economy have complicated the job of the manager and volunteer trustees. These changes continue to accelerate.

Organizations that have mastered these trends are flourishing—even leveraging them to their advantage.

For those that have not, however, the sense that “something's not quite right” can seem unshakable. For too many, these changes have led to less art, decreased visibility, diminished relevance—even financial collapse.

These challenges inform our approach. Never has the need to balance best practices and new approaches been so urgent.

Institute leadership and consultants—all arts managers themselves—understand that, in today’s environment, there is no time or resource to waste. Therefore, Institute services are lean, direct, and practical.

The DeVos Institute has served more than 2,000 organizations from over 80 countries since Michael M. Kaiser founded it during his tenure as President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. While environments, objectives, and disciplines vary, each of our clients shares the desire to create, market, and sustain exemplary cultural programs.

The DeVos Institute has designed its services to assist a wide range of institutions, from traditional performing and presenting organizations, museums, galleries, art schools, and libraries, to botanical gardens, glass-making studios, public art trusts, and nonprofit cinemas, to name a few.

In 2014, the DeVos Institute transitioned to the University of Maryland, where it continues to offer support to individuals, organizations, and—in collaboration with foundations and governments—to communities of organizations around the world.

For more information about the DeVos Institute, please visit [www.devosinstitute.net](http://www.devosinstitute.net).

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