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

**Six Executives from Four Countries Will Join Arts Management Intensive  
June 27 – July 22, 2022**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland announces a new cohort of six arts managers to its three-year Fellowship program.

The Institute's Fellowship program serves entrepreneurial executives in the arts and cultural sector who are prepared to look critically at their work, challenge assumptions, and develop rigorous strategies to address the most pressing challenges facing their organizations, regions, and art forms at large. The cohorts will be in residence in Washington, D.C. for a month-long arts management intensive led by DeVos Institute executives, consultants, and experts from the field. Designed for individuals who have dedicated themselves to management, rather than artistic leadership, the program supports leaders in developing, implementing, and refining organizational strategies over a three-year, cohort-based engagement.

Biographies of these new Fellows follow, and biographies of the Institute's continuing fellows can be found [here](#).

At the DeVos Institute, we believe that creative practice is an essential expression of the dignity, aspirations, and achievements of individuals, communities, and societies, and that pro-active support for creative practice as a platform for intercultural, and international, cooperation is required in a healthy global society. Led by Institute Founder, Michael M. Kaiser, and President, Brett Egan, the Fellowship is equally tactical and aspirational in exemplifying these beliefs. The program emphasizes critical organizational capacities in long-term artistic planning, marketing, fundraising, board development, and financial management; while provoking broader questions of mission, relevance, impact, and the role of art – and the dialogue it provokes – as an instrument of peace. The program emboldens leaders who leverage creative practice to confront injustice, advance social change, and encourage empathy for other perspectives and ways of life. The program acknowledges a historical lack of equity across communities and philanthropic systems and empowers leaders to build equitable and inclusive systems that assure people of every class, race, geography, age, ability, gender, and sexual orientation have equal access to, and representation in, art and creative practice.

Individuals typically engage in the Fellowship at point of inflection in their career, where an infusion of strategic training, mentorship, peer learning, and reflection is necessary to advance both their work in the organization and their role as a leader in their field. All Fellows share a deep commitment to the role of arts, culture, and creative practice in their respective societies and an inquisitiveness that drives them to engage deeply in the immersive and collaborative environment.

The Institute's core beliefs can be found [here](#). To date, the Institute's Fellowship program has served over 250 arts managers from over 50 countries. DeVos Institute Chairman Michael M. Kaiser launched the Fellowship program in 2001 during his tenure as President of the Kennedy Center. In 2008, the Institute introduced the current, intensive model of one month in residence each summer for three years and transitioned to the University of Maryland from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2014.

The DeVos Institute’s Fellowship program is made possible with the support of the University of Maryland.

### **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 1,000 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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**2024 Fellowship Cohort  
Will complete the First Year of the Three-Year Program in 2022**

Name	Position	Organization	City	Country
Alexis Spieldenner	Co-Founder & Executive Director	Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts	Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario	Canada
Emmanuel Paul Ng	Partnerships & Development Manager	Singapore Repertory Theatre	Singapore	Singapore
Jorge Silva	Executive Director	The Neo-Futurists	Chicago, Illinois	United States
María Catalina Prieto Vásquez	Deputy Director, Programming	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	Executive Director	A.I.M. by Kyle Abraham	Brooklyn, New York	United States

**2024 Fellows, who will begin their First of the Three-Year Program in 2022:**

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

1<sup>st</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, she launched Bravo Niagara! in 2014 upon graduation from Duke University. A mother-daughter-led nonprofit charitable organization founded by “two women dreamers” (Toronto Star), Bravo Niagara! produces and presents transformative artistic performances featuring leading Canadian and international artists in the Niagara region. Born in the US and now based in Canada, Alexis brings a unique binational perspective to her work with Bravo Niagara! and strives to contribute to Niagara’s rich cultural landscape and role as an international destination for the arts.

As executive producer of Bravo Niagara!’s annual Voices of Freedom Festival, Alexis is committed to fostering intercultural dialogue and celebrating diversity through the arts. In recognition of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, the inaugural 2015 festival illuminated Niagara’s history as a terminus of the Underground Railroad and was endorsed by the UNESCO Slave Route Project. The Voices of Freedom Festival has since developed into an important platform for amplifying underrepresented voices and histories through inspiring performances enriched with educational outreach initiatives. Alexis is the recipient of the 2016 Lincoln M. Alexander Award, presented by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, which recognizes young leaders for their efforts to end racial discrimination and promote positive social change. She holds a bachelor’s degree in International Comparative Studies from Duke University, where she graduated with high distinction.

**Emmanuel Paul Ng**  
Singapore

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort  
Partnerships & Development Manager, Singapore Repertory Theatre  
[www.srt.com.sg](http://www.srt.com.sg)



Emmanuel Paul Ng is the head of Partnerships & Development at Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT). Founded in 1993, SRT is one of the leading English language theatre producers and presenters in Asia. SRT's repertoire ranges from original musicals to critically acclaimed plays and the popular Shakespeare in the Park series. SRT was the first Singaporean theatre company on Broadway in 1998 as Associate Producer of *Golden Child*, which earned three Tony Award nominations. SRT is one of the biggest producers of children's theatre in Southeast Asia and impacts thousands of students, teachers, and children through world class arts-integrated learning programmes.

As an arts manager, Emmanuel is passionate about using the arts to enrich society. He drives initiatives such as the Student Education Fund which enables over 3,000 underprivileged students to access the holistic benefits of theatre annually; SRT's ACCESS agenda which spearheads industry change to make the arts accessible to people with different needs; and leveraging on a strong season to address various societal issues including cyberbullying and youth suicide through the arts.

Emmanuel holds a Master of Science, International Relations from University of Amsterdam and a Bachelor of Arts, Political Science from National University of Singapore. He has devoted over a decade of his life to shaping young minds through coaching the skills of competitive debate.

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

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort  
Managing Director, The Neo-Futurists  
<https://neofuturists.org/>



Jorge Silva is a writer/performer, producer, and the Managing Director for The Neo-Futurists in Chicago, Illinois. Silva was previously the Producing Coordinator for the Goodman Theatre serving as the producing liaison for community engagement projects and the curator for artistic programming. 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.

He previously served as 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 was also a deviser with the interactive theatre company dog & pony DC and was a part of a collective that developed the socially conscious, trilingual (English, Spanish, and American Sign Language) experimental works *Toast and Squares*. Silva is also an Artistic Affiliate with Teatro Travieso in Wooster, Ohio.

Silva is also a freelance writer and essayist. His works have been featured in the online magazine *Scout & Birdie*, *Junior Varsity*, *Pivot Arts: Voting Rights*, *Salonathon*, *Hot Kitchen Collective*, *National Cool Shorts*, *The LIVINGroom*, *Story District [in DC]*, *Prop Thtr*, and *THE ARROW* with The Neo-Futurists. Silva has been nominated for a Chicago Latino Network Award and several Alliance for Latinx Theatre Artists of Chicago Awards.

Outside of theatre, Silva is an Affinity Group Leader for the Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund’s mentoring program and, similarly, is a Career Coach with the The Posse Foundation: Chicago. He is 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**

1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2024 Cohort

Deputy Director, Programming, Medellin Philharmonic Orchestra

<https://filarmed.org/>



María Catalina Prieto is Programming Director of the Medellin Philharmonic Orchestra, the only privately-run self-sustainable professional Orchestra in Colombia where she is in charge of the artistic programming of the Orchestra as well as the Research & Development, Education, Outreach, and Production Departments. She has led the creation of new programs such as the Education Program in different rural areas of the Department; 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**

1<sup>st</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**  
**Brooklyn, New York, United States**

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



Sydney Liggett 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.