



**WASHINGTON
PERFORMING ARTS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
JULY 24, 2024**

**CONTACT: Amanda Sweet
(347) 564-3371
amanda@bucklesweet.com**

**WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS WELCOMES
THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS TO ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS &
NINE NEW JUNIOR BOARD MEMBERS**

(Washington, D.C.)—Washington Performing Arts announced the appointment of three new members to its Board of Directors: Deidra Jackson, Ellen Stark Gold and Olwen Thorpe Pongrace, as well as nine new Junior Board members: Chris Bird, Omar B. Farid, Ersian François, Anne Friend, Hannah Gross, Dr. Christopher D. Hill, Hali Larkins, J.K. Phenix, and Michaela Tummings.

“Washington Performing Arts Board of Directors are advocates for our mission, participants in our programs and events, and supporters who ensure the vibrancy of our organization,” said Meiyu Tsung, Director of Advancement. “Their strategic leadership ensures that Washington Performing Arts fulfills its mission to bring meaningful, wide-ranging artistic programs to stages, schools, and neighborhoods throughout our nation’s capital.”

Washington Performing Arts has a dynamic and deeply engaged Board of Directors, Junior Board, and Women’s Committee, comprised of members from varied backgrounds, generations, professional expertise, and life experience.

The Junior Board has brought together a dedicated and diverse set of young professionals who are enthusiastic about the arts and committed to advancing philanthropy and advocacy in the D.C. area. Their involvement in the Junior Board encompasses professional development in governance, including mentorship from members of the Washington Performing Arts Board of Directors, creating a natural progression into that leadership body.

Washington Performing Arts seeks balanced representation across gender, age, race, ethnicity, and lived experience in both of its boards. These values have been fundamental to Washington Performing Arts since its founding days (by Patrick Hayes and Todd Duncan), and this work is intentional and ongoing.

A full listing can be found at <https://www.washingtonperformingarts.org/our-people#board> .
Washington Performing Arts Board members serve three-year terms with no term limits.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS BIOGRAPHIES

Deidra Jackson is the Managing Partner of Opus Strategies. Launched in 2013, the firm has grown significantly by developing and leading the implementation of strategy, relationship development, public policy engagement, and overall business advancement initiatives with key federal, state, and local policy makers. Currently, Jackson is also a Senior Advisor for the U.S. government affairs practice within FTI Consulting's Strategic Communications, where she is responsible for advising clients across industries, particularly in complex situations where government, commercial, and financial markets are increasingly intersecting such as environmental justice, sustainability, and talent. Her experience includes over twenty years in the area of public relations, internal and external communications, advocacy, corporate philanthropy, and crisis management. Current and past Board service includes Washington D.C. Chapter Foundation Chair of Jack and Jill of America Foundation (and past Foundation Chair of the Houston chapter) and past Marketing Committee Chair of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra.

Ellen Stark Gold is a freelance writer/editor and a retired DC tour guide. Gold is a past president of the Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington, D.C. She currently serves as the Scholarship Chair of the D.C. Medical Society and Alliance Foundation. Ms. Gold is a graduate of the University of Vermont.

Olwen Thorpe Pongrace is a strategic communications specialist committed to working with clients who effect change for the better. She works as a senior advisor to corporate executives, individuals, and nonprofits that work to improve the society in which we live, the environment that sustains us, the art that feeds the human spirit, and the lives of children worldwide. With over 20 years of experience, Pongrace has worked in various capacities with non-profits (including as Director of External Affairs at Choral Arts Society of Washington), governmental organizations, foundations, and healthcare organizations. She is a past Board member of CulturalDC (Vice Chair) and The Choral Arts Society of Washington.

JUNIOR BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

Chris Bird is a structural engineer with Silman in Washington, DC, supporting the design of new and rehabilitation of existing building structures. Outside of work, he enjoys supporting fellow professional and amateur classical musicians. He has studied piano since age 6 and enjoys learning and performing new solo and chamber repertoire.

Omar B. Farid joins the Washington Performing Arts Junior Board with a longtime passion for classical music, opera, chamber music, and jazz. He is a member of the MoMA Young Patrons Council in New York, a Carnegie Hall Friend, a Young Friend of the Berlin State Opera (Staatsoper Berlin/Staatsoper Unter den Linden), and Young Friend of the Society of Friends of the Bayreuth Festival in Germany.

Ersian François A creative solution seeker and arts advocate with an international arts management background, Ersian's experience onstage and off spans from Baroque opera to contemporary theatre. At The Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics, Ersian manages the daily financial and administrative operations, and supports a wide range of artistic projects. She has served on a grant committee for Opera America; collaborated with The Folger Shakespeare Library, The Avalon Theatre,

and the Bowie Center for Performing Arts to create community-centric events; and is the co-creator of the acclaimed family program Opera Starts with Oh! Online. While living in Paris, Ersian worked with the Choir and Orchestra of Sorbonne Universities, Jérémie Rhorer's Le Cercle de l'Harmonie, Raphaël Pichon's Pygmalion, and co-founded the Karaïb Festival in Île-de-France.

Anne Friend Staff Sergeant Anne Friend is a Resource Management NCO for The U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own." Ms. Friend is from the Northern Virginia area. She attended Virginia Tech for an undergraduate degree in music education and flute performance and University of North Carolina School of the Arts for a Masters of Music. After graduating from UNCSA, Ms. Friend was a Kenan Fellow at Lincoln Center Education in New York City. Following the fellowship, she worked in arts administration at the International School of Music in Bethesda, MD and the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, VA. Ms. Friend enlisted in the Army in 2019 as a flute player. She has previously been stationed at Fort Campbell, KY with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Band and Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story at the United States Army School of Music.

Hannah Gross is a Private Client Senior Relationship Associate at Brown Advisory where she supports high-net-worth individuals, families, and endowments & foundations to meet their long-term investment goals. Prior to joining the firm, she served as a Development Associate at Georgetown University and as a member of the Patron Program team at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Gross is a member of The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and The Phillips Collection and previously served as a committee member & volunteer for the Junior League in both DC and New York.

Dr. Christopher D. Hill is a Senior Program Officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where he leads initiatives to ensure equitable access to education and economic mobility. With a passion for integrating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices, Dr. Hill works to enhance student outcomes and experiences across higher education. Dr. Hill also serves as an adjunct professor of Research Methods and Statistics at Bowie State University and offers his expertise as an independent consultant for various professional associations, non-profits, and universities. His previous roles include working with the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Education Statistics and lead data analyst for the Black Mental Health Workforce Survey Report with the Association of Black Psychologists.

Hali Larkins A seasoned Learning Experience Designer with a deep love for the arts, Hali Larkins brings a unique perspective to the Washington Performing Arts Junior Board. Her 8 years of experience crafting impactful learning programs at Fortune 500 companies and the U.S. Department of Education are coupled with a passion for making performing arts accessible to all. Larkins' proven track record includes leading projects to increase in community engagement through eLearning and virtual initiatives, demonstrating her expertise in program management and education design.

J.K. Phenix is committed to creating pathways for success in underserved communities through his work in public policy and the non-profit sector. A native of Atlanta, Georgia, he is known for driving change in entrepreneurship, workforce development, and housing affordability, utilizing his analytical skills and communication abilities to address the needs of marginalized groups. As Chief of Staff for the U.S. Black Chambers, J.K. supports the growth of over 3.2 million Black-owned businesses nationwide by promoting inclusive economic policies. He leads strategic initiatives and daily operations, collaborating with entities like the U.S. Small Business Administration to provide mentorship and resources to empower America's Main Street ecosystem.

Michaela Tummings is a dynamic young professional based in Washington, DC. Her journey began in Columbia, MD, where she started playing the piano at the age of four. This early exposure to music ignited a passion that would shape her future. However, her realization of the potential of public policy as a tool for community impact led her to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Government from Lafayette College. After graduation, Michaela began her career in client services, quickly pivoting to support the public sector. Michaela is now an Implementation Manager at Govini. Beyond her professional endeavors, Michaela empowers the next generation of student-athletes as a volleyball coach. You can find Michaela checking out the local concert scene or the newest museum exhibits outside work.

ABOUT WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS

One of the most established and honored performing arts institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts champions the arts as a unifying force and has engaged for more than half a century with artists, audiences, students, and civic life. The city is truly our stage: for decades, in venues ranging from concert halls and clubs to public parks, we have presented a tremendous range of artists and art forms, from the most distinguished symphony orchestras to both renowned and emerging artists in classical music, jazz, international genres, and more. We also have an ever-expanding artistic and educational presence on the internet, envisioning ongoing opportunities for online connection and community.

Washington Performing Arts deeply values its partnerships with local organizations and other arts institutions. Through events online and in myriad performance venues and neighborhoods, we engage international visiting artists in community programs and introduce local artists to wider audiences. We place a premium on establishing artists as a continuing presence in the lives of both young people and adults through residencies and education programs.

Our achievements have been recognized with a National Medal of Arts and with three Mayor's Arts Awards from the DC Government. We have now embarked upon our second half-century, ever inspired by the motto of our founder, Patrick Hayes: "Everybody in, nobody out."

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