



# WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS

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## **WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS ELECTS TRISTA COLBERT AS INCOMING BOARD CHAIR**

### ***SUNNY ALSUP AND NICI BUSH TO SERVE AS CO-VICE CHAIRS***

***Colbert is an innovative executive, dedicated community leader, and  
lifelong supporter of the performing arts***

**Washington, D.C. - Washington Performing Arts** announced today that **Trista Colbert** is elected Chair of the Board of Directors, effective September 1, 2026. Colbert succeeds **Rudy Burwell**, who steps down as Chair on September 1, 2026, and continues to serve as a member of the Board of Directors. **Nici Bush** and **Sunny Alsup** will serve as vice co-chairs.

Trista Colbert is the Founder & CEO of Colbert Edge LLC, a technology and operations consultancy that partners with corporate and public sector leaders to accelerate transformation and optimize operations, drawing on the best of human expertise and AI. Colbert brings nearly a decade of deeply engaged WPA board leadership and a genuine, abiding love for the arts in all forms to this pivotal role. Her commitment to the arts is part of her broader life of service: co-founder of multiple STEM and HBCU endowments, Board Director for Our Lady of Good Counsel High School in Maryland, and longtime supporter of A Wider Circle—a nonprofit dedicated to ending poverty.

Colbert has been a dedicated member of the Washington Performing Arts Board of Directors since 2018, now in her third consecutive three-year term. Appointed to the Executive Committee in 2020, she has been a steady and trusted voice in the organization's most consequential decisions, serving on multiple committees and task forces, including Strategic Plan Implementation, Program Advocacy, Contributed Revenue, and Gospel Programs. She also co-chaired the organization's acclaimed 2021 virtual gala, "Roots and Wings," honoring James Sandman. Most recently serving as Vice Chair, Trista steps into the Chair role with an expansive understanding of WPA's history, programs, people, and potential.

"Trista's professional expertise as a business owner, corporate executive, and entrepreneur, have long benefitted our wider team's strategic planning and systems thinking as well, and we all look forward to working more closely with her," said Washington Performing Arts President and CEO **Jenny Bilfield**.

“In addition to bringing a love for every facet of Washington Performing Arts, Trista is deeply committed to our inclusive ethos and sustained legacy of artistic excellence. She is one of our most treasured and impactful thought partners and has been a trusted advisor to me, as have our co-vice chairs, Sunny Alsup and Nici Bush. Trista has made it a priority to immerse deeply in our programs and operational model, long before stepping into this new role. I am so fortunate to have worked with outstanding Board Chairs, and partnering with Rudy Burwell these past four years has been both a privilege and a great pleasure.”

"WPA's vision, that our community is unified through vibrant performing arts experiences, is something I have witnessed firsthand through the power of our programming," said **Trista Colbert**. "I am deeply honored to serve in this new capacity and wholly committed to advancing WPA's mission, sustaining and growing our extraordinary classical music legacy, deepening our impact, and ensuring that the arts remain a unifying force for all. I applaud the remarkable leadership of our outgoing Chair, Rudy Burwell, whose visionary focus on the intersection of arts, mental health, and veterans' advocacy ignited programs and partnerships that forged meaningful new connections within our community. Washington Performing Arts is stronger because of his leadership."

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## **ABOUT TRISTA COLBERT**

Colbert is Founder & CEO of Colbert Edge LLC, a technology and operations consultancy that partners with corporate and public sector leaders to accelerate transformation, optimize operations, and achieve outcomes that matter. She previously served as Vice President & Senior Partner at IBM Consulting, where she led Federal Hybrid Cloud sales and delivery, driving mission outcomes for federal clients. Earlier executive roles at Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey and Ford Motor Company cemented her reputation as a trusted, high-impact leader at the intersection of business and technology.

Moved equally by the enduring majesty of classical music, soul-stirring gospel, and creative vibrancy of jazz and dance, Colbert has long believed that the arts are a powerful force for human connection. Her deep love for gospel music traces to her earliest memories—watching her mother, grandmother, and siblings lift their voices in praise and community—a legacy that drew her to Washington Performing Arts and continues to inspire her service.

Trista Colbert holds master's degrees in computer science and public policy leadership from Clark Atlanta University and Georgetown University, respectively. She is the proud mother of two adult sons, Theo and Miles, and resides in Washington, D.C.

## **ABOUT SUNNY ALSUP**

Sunny Jung Alsup trained as a landscape architect and helped found an award-winning design firm, LSG, where she practiced for 25 years. Her talent and dedication to the profession were recognized when she was named a Fellow in the ASLA in 2000. She participated in making art and music, acting, and designing before channeling her focus on her chosen profession. She served 10 years and chaired the board of the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company and remains a staunch supporter.

As a longtime member of the National Advisory Board at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, she raised funds and facilitates art acquisitions. Her tastes are eclectic, demonstrated by her and her husband Bill Alsup's longtime support and subscriptions to the opera, symphony, ballet, and a variety of theaters. A love of community motivates her involvement and leadership in an array of organizations, such as the boards of The Potomac Conservancy, NARAL, NFTE (National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship),

and NOMA Parks Foundation. For N Street Village, a local women's shelter, she co-founded the Ambassadors Council to raise awareness and funding. Due to her early public-school inspiration, her goal at Washington Performing Arts is to make possible further funding for music education and appreciation in the schools.

## **ABOUT NICI BUSH**

Nici Bush is a member of the Mars Leadership Team and in her role as Chief Innovation, Science and Technology Officer for Mars, she has global oversight of R&D, Supply, and Commercial (Procurement). She is Secretary of Mars' Technology Committee – a committee of the Mars Board driving evidence-based and scientific conversations on key areas such as health & wellbeing, nutrition, supply chain resilience and sustainability. Nici's career at Mars spans over three decades, multiple business disciplines and numerous regions and countries. She has deep expertise in manufacturing operations, supply chain, and R&D across Mars Snacking, Petcare and Food & Nutrition.

Nici is an active champion of people development, specifically supporting people with disabilities and women in leadership. Nici has a master's degree in natural sciences (Chemistry and Material Science) from the University of Cambridge in England, and building on her passion for coaching, supplemented her degrees with a leadership coaching accreditation from Georgetown University. She is an International Coaching Federation (ICF)-certified coach (ACC level). She lives in McLean, VA with her husband, Toby.

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## **ABOUT WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS**

One of the most established and honored performing arts institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts has engaged for 60 years 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 online, 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 four 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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