



WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 2, 2026

CONTACT:

Amanda Sweet

(347) 564-3371

amanda@bucklesweet.com

WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS WELCOMES NINE NEW MEMBERS TO ITS JUNIOR BOARD

(Washington, D.C.)—Washington Performing Arts today announced the appointment of nine new members to its Junior Board: **Simone Earle, Donovan M. Harris, Olivia Kozlevcar, Nic Nivison, Eiman Siddiqui, Martín Uribe Francia, Sarat Varanasi, Olivia Vega, and Cierra Wells.**

Washington Performing Arts launched the Junior Board in 2016 to develop the next generation of board leaders and arts supporters, answering a prevailing refrain: how do we continue to infuse our Boards with new leaders who are passionate about the arts? Just as it spotlights new talent through its presentations and programs, Washington Performing Arts created the Junior Board to bring that same commitment to the governance pipeline.

The Junior Board brings together a dedicated and diverse set of young professionals, age 40 and under, who are enthusiastic about the arts and committed to advancing philanthropy and advocacy in the D.C. area. Members play a crucial role in audience development and oftentimes contribute meaningfully to programming and fundraising efforts. Their involvement also 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, including officer and committee chair roles.

“Washington Performing Arts is delighted to welcome this remarkable group of young professionals to our Junior Board. Representing fields ranging from brand marketing, communications, and media to law, public policy, government affairs, and international development, they bring energy, expertise, and a genuine love of the arts to our community. We look forward to their partnership, creativity, and advocacy in the years ahead,” said President and CEO Jenny Bilfield.

Washington Performing Arts seeks balanced representation across gender, age, race, ethnicity, and lived experience in both its Junior Board and Board of Directors. 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.

Find a full listing of board members at [washingtonperformingarts.org/our-people#board](https://www.washingtonperformingarts.org/our-people#board).

JUNIOR BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

Simone Earle is a Global Brand Lead at Spotify, where she leads brand marketing initiatives that shape how hundreds of millions of people connect with the company's product and brand worldwide. She has built scalable global marketing strategies, led high-performing teams, and driven business growth at the intersection of technology, entertainment, and culture. Prior to Spotify, Simone led integrated marketing campaigns for global brands including Nike and Adidas at Wieden+Kennedy, Kamp Grizzly, and Ogilvy. She is also committed to developing the next generation of industry leaders through mentorship and education, previously serving as a mentor with the 4A's MAIP program and as a guest lecturer at Elon University. Simone has earned recognition from Forbes 30 Under 30, Adweek Rising, ADCOLOR Future, and Live Nation's Next Gem Femme. She is a graduate of Elon University and a former Division I track and field athlete.

Donovan M. Harris is a strategic communications leader with experience shaping narratives across media, government, advocacy, and the private sector. An Atlanta native based in Washington, D.C., he has consulted for leaders at Fortune 500 companies and was an appointee in the Biden Administration, working in Public Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Treasury. He has also led communications at an international nonprofit organization. Prior to that, Donovan worked as a television news reporter covering politics and breaking news in Georgia and South Carolina. Donovan holds a Master of Arts in Political Psychology from Arizona State University and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Georgia.

Olivia Kozlevcar is the Marketing and Communications Associate at Washingtonian Custom Media, where she oversees client accounts, communications, and custom media projects. Outside the office, she is an advocate for arts education, having spent most of her life pursuing music, theatre, and creative writing. Her passion for expanding access to the performing arts stems from a belief in their incomparable ability to foster a sense of community and self-identity. She holds an MFA in Writing for Screen & TV from the University of Southern California and a BA in Literature & Journalism from American University.

Nic Nivison is an attorney and public servant based in Alexandria, Virginia. He serves as counsel with the federal government, where he focuses on financial services law and public policy. A lifelong supporter of the performing arts, Nic spent much of his youth immersed in theater and music—performing in musical theater productions, singing in show choir, teaching dance, and playing in both band and orchestra. While his career has taken him into law and public service, the arts remain a central part of his life. He believes access to music, theater, and arts education helps build confidence, creativity, and community, particularly for young people.

Eiman Siddiqui has spent over a decade in public policy. He is currently Director of U.S. Government Affairs at American Express, where he lobbies on the company's behalf before Congress, the executive branch, and state governments. Before joining American Express, Eiman was Chief of Staff and Policy Director in the Texas House of Representatives and worked as a multi-client lobbyist in Texas. Eiman has

served on the boards of the LBJ Presidential Library Future Forum and a Travis County municipal utility district. He has also co-chaired the Texas Book Festival, ran the Austin hub of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers, and sat on the Austin Symphony Orchestra's young professionals board. Eiman has a B.S. from the University of Houston and is finishing his MPA at Duke.

Martín Uribe-Francia is an attorney based in the Washington, D.C. area specializing in immigration and global mobility matters. Originally from Peru, he is passionate about fostering cross-cultural connections and expanding access to opportunities through both his professional and community work. Martín currently serves as an At-Large Board Member of the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia and actively helps organize social and networking events. A longtime supporter of the performing arts, he recently returned to studying violin and enjoys attending theater, orchestral, and live music performances across the Washington metropolitan area.

Sarat Varanasi is a Senior Budget & Policy Analyst in the Government of District of Columbia, where he oversees a portfolio supporting economic development, affordable housing, workforce initiatives, and community revitalization. Previously, he served as a Policy Analyst at the White House Office of Management and Budget, helping shape federal grants and financial management policy, and as a Senior Consultant at Guidehouse supporting clean energy grants in underserved communities. Earlier in his career, Sarat worked in corporate finance at Paramount Global and Macy's before earning a Master of Public Policy from American University. A passionate advocate for the arts, Sarat enjoys supporting organizations that expand access to the arts and cultivate the next generation of artists.

Olivia Vega is a Senior Counsel at Capital One, where she advises on complex privacy matters, international data strategy, and federal privacy policy advocacy. Prior to joining Capital One, she practiced as a privacy associate at Covington & Burling LLP, where she maintained an active pro bono practice supporting vulnerable individuals, veterans, and small businesses. Olivia studied journalism at the University of Florida before moving to Chicago to earn her law degree at Northwestern. As a French horn player in the Arlington Concert Band, Olivia remains a staunch advocate for the vital role community music initiatives play in fostering civic connection and well-being. Outside of work, Olivia can be found exploring D.C.'s vibrant live performance scene, reading contemporary fiction, and cheering on the Florida Gators.

Cierra Wells is an international development strategist whose professional background sits at the intersection of economic development, business, and communications. Her experience spans the White House, Accenture, and the World Bank Group, where she has supported initiatives focused on private sector development, social innovation, and inclusive economic growth across emerging markets. Through fieldwork and research across Africa and Latin America, she has designed innovative business solutions that expand economic opportunity and strengthen communities. Cierra holds a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs and a B.B.A. in International Business from Howard University. She is affiliated with the Institute of Global Politics, founded by Hillary Clinton and Keren Yarhi-Milo, Management Leadership for Tomorrow, and the Black Professionals in International Affairs network.

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 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."

Follow Washington Performing Arts on Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonPerformingArtsSociety>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/washingtonperformingarts/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/wpasadmin>

Threads: <https://www.threads.com/@washingtonperformingarts>

###