

## ArtsNEXT: Funding for Bold, Groundbreaking Projects



**Jacquelynn Nzingha Byrd** | *Cincinnati, Ohio*

Jacquelynn Nzingha Byrd is a multidisciplinary arts leader, cultural curator, and community wellness advocate with more than a decade of experience advancing Black arts, youth development, and creative entrepreneurship in Cincinnati. She is the founder and executive director of Sweet Sistah Splash, a culture and wellness center that produces programs such as AfroArt After Dark, the AfroSwag Hair & Fashion Showcase, and the Cincinnati Young Entrepreneurs initiative. Byrd also owns Beach Birds Travel, where she curates arts-centered cultural immersion tours in Ghana that highlight diasporic connections and African creative industries. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and Africana studies from Wright State University and has secured more than \$300,000 in grants supporting youth arts engagement, public art and community-driven cultural programming.



**Emily Dake** | *Norwood, Ohio*

Emily Dake is the executive director and co-founder of Indigo Hippo, a Cincinnati-based nonprofit and creative reuse center. Over the past 10 years, she has overseen the planning and execution of Indigo Hippo's community arts programming, managed its gallery program and storefront, guided the organization's growth and mission, and led fundraising, grantwriting, and development efforts. Dake holds a BFA in ceramics from the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning program and continues to pursue her personal creative work in clay and sculpture alongside her contributions to Cincinnati's arts community.



**Karen Goeschko** | *Madison, Wisconsin*

Karen Goeschko is the assistant director of the Wisconsin Arts Board, the state's arts agency. Her career began with two arts internships in London, leading her to earn a master's degree in community arts management. She then completed a yearlong fellowship with Americans for the Arts in Washington, D.C., followed by seven years as community arts coordinator for the West Virginia state arts agency. At the Wisconsin Arts Board, Goeschko coordinates the agency's grant programs, technical assistance services, and strategic planning process. She works closely with statewide arts service organizations, including the Wisconsin Presenters Network, Create Wisconsin, and the Association of Wisconsin Artists. She has also served as a grant reviewer for multiple state arts agencies and for the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2020, Goeschko received the Robert E. Gard Leadership Award, recognizing her career-long contributions to advancing the arts and community development through the arts.

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**Marguerite Hannah** | *Cleveland, Ohio*

Marguerite Hannah is the general manager of Cleveland Public Theatre, with a career in theatre that spans directing, dramaturgy, acting, and arts administration. A seasoned performer, she has appeared on the stages of regional theatres across the country. From 2006 to 2024, she served as business manager and associate producer of Horizon Theatre in Atlanta. She also worked on the production team for the first three years of Atlanta's National Black Arts Festival. In 2020, Hannah created and produced The New Georgia Woman Project: Black Women Speak, a playwrights' lab and community-engagement initiative for Black women in the Atlanta metro area. In 2022, she was the co-recipient of the Atlanta Suzi Award for direction of "The Light." She has held national leadership roles and is also a member of Actors' Equity Association.



**Jason Alexander Holmes** | *Cincinnati, Ohio*

Jason Alexander Holmes, associate director of choruses at the May Festival, is a music educator, conductor, and performer from Ridgeway, Virginia. His work as a teacher, singer, pianist, conductor, and music director has brought him to work with choirs, orchestras, theatre companies, and opera companies. As a choral educator, Holmes has conducted honor choirs and presented workshops with singers of all ages. Prior to coming to Cincinnati, he was director of educational programming at the Boston Children's Chorus. Holmes has taught music at the elementary and secondary levels in and around Rochester, New York. This work includes leading the University of Rochester Gospel Choir and the Eastman Young Children's Chorus.



**Jessica Keeton** | *Ironton, Ohio*

Jessica Keeton is the assistant director of community development at the Ironton-Lawrence Community Action Organization, a role she has held since March 2023. Previously, she spent nearly 13 years as the economic development coordinator for the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission. Throughout her career, Keeton has facilitated hundreds of community and economic development projects across Appalachian Ohio, including 21 projects in 19 communities supported through the historic Appalachian Community Grant Program, which focused on enhancing riverfront communities from New Richmond to New Philadelphia. Keeton is a graduate of Shawnee State University and lives in Minford, Ohio.

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**Bryce Kessler** | *Cincinnati, Ohio*

Bryce Kessler has overseen The Well's National Mindful Music Moments program for the past five years, creating daily listening content that helps schools begin their day with a brief guided meditation followed by three minutes of calming classical and contemporary music. The program serves more than 150 schools in Ohio, and 300 schools nationwide, in partnership with leading orchestras and education organizations. Kessler is a strong advocate for shared arts and wellness experiences, particularly during a time of heightened need for student and staff well-being. Born into a family of educators, Kessler has witnessed firsthand the lifelong impact of music and arts education. He has studied piano and cello for 15 years and maintains a deep appreciation for orchestral music. He is a graduate of Baldwin Wallace University's arts management and entrepreneurship and theatre directing programs.



**Kevin Lambes** | *Akron, Ohio*

Kevin Lambes, a native of Akron, returned to Northeast Ohio after two decades of professional experience in theater and hospitality operations in New York City, Minneapolis, Seattle, and Nashville. He is the executive director of Weathervane Playhouse, where he first volunteered before serving in committee and board leadership roles. In this role, he oversees fundraising, budgeting, programming, and operations for the 91-year-old community theater. Lambes' background includes extensive experience in arts administration, nonprofit financial management, and community engagement, providing a broad and practical perspective within the cultural sector. His governance service includes positions as a board member and treasurer for Duplication Cares, which supports families affected by Duplication Syndrome; secretary for the Wayne Center for the Arts; and president of the board of directors for the Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce.



**Paola Marquez-Smith** | *Saint Clair, Michigan*

Paola Marquez-Smith is a Latinx Colombian composer, psychologist, and social worker whose work bridges music, human behavior, and social impact. She holds an MA in composition from Syracuse University and an MA in social work from the University of Michigan. A respected arts reviewer and panelist, Marquez-Smith has served on national and regional panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, Chorus America, the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, AIMS Detroit, and the University of Michigan. Her music has been performed internationally and featured by organizations such as Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Piano Spheres, and Mizzou New Music Initiative. Marquez-Smith is currently a composer, executive-life coach, assistant director at the Michigan State University Community Music School-Detroit, and composition faculty for the Montecito International Music Festival.

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**Dwylett Chambers Montgomery** | *West Chester, Ohio*

Dwylett Chambers Montgomery is a visionary creator and consultant working at the intersection of children’s media, health equity, and education. Originally working primarily in literatures, she has moved into healthcare edutainment where she uses animation to take the fear out of doctor visits for children ages three to seven through her original series, “The Great Adventures at Park Clinic.” As a federal grant reviewer and founder of Kids’ Reality Books, she brings expertise in storytelling, SEL programming, and impact communication. Montgomery also serves on multiple executive boards supporting literacy, the arts, and community health.



**Alandes Powell** | *Cincinnati, Ohio*

Alandes Powell is the president, CEO, and co-founder of Black Art Speaks, a Cincinnati-based nonprofit arts collective dedicated to civic engagement, cultural storytelling, and community-centered public art. With more than 30 years of experience in financial services and organizational leadership, she previously served as senior vice president at Citi and as vice president and director of consumer business controls at Fifth Third Bank. Powell is a respected community advocate and cultural strategist, widely recognized for initiating Cincinnati’s historic Black Lives Matter mural, inspired by her poem “We Want What You Want.” She serves on the boards of the Robert O’Neal Multicultural Arts Center, GenNow, and the Cincinnati Ballet, and is a recent NAACP award recipient. Her work emphasizes equity, artist advancement, and the development of sustainable, community-impact models through art and civic empowerment.



**Miranda L. Rife** | *Columbus, Ohio*

Miranda L. Rife, Esq., is an attorney and the founder of Rife Law, a firm dedicated to providing high-quality, accessible legal services tailored to individual artists, creative businesses, and nonprofit organizations across Ohio. She holds a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary multimedia arts from the University of Findlay, a master’s degree in arts policy and administration from the Ohio State University, and a JD from Capital University Law School. Rife’s legal practice is shaped by her experience in radio, music journalism, literary publishing, arts policy, nonprofit management, development, and administrative law. She is also a printmaker and guitarist. She serves on the board of the Phoenix Rising Printmaking Cooperative and is the program coordinator for the Greater Columbus Arts Council’s Lawyer Referral Services Program.

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**Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth** | *Cincinnati, Ohio*

Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth is the executive director of FotoFocus, a non-profit arts organization that champions photography and lens-based art. Previously, Siegwarth was the Kettering Curator of Photography and Special Projects at the Dayton Art Institute. She has held positions at various art institutions and archives, including the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Center for Creative Photography, and Zhulong Gallery. Siegwarth is an alum of the Museum Leadership Institute's NexGen 2020 Executive Education for the Next Generation of Museum Leaders program and received a BA and MA in art history from

The University of Arizona.



**Merwin Siu** | *Ottawa Hills, Ohio*

Merwin Siu holds the David W. Robinson Chair as the Toledo Symphony Orchestra's principal second violin and serves as the artistic administrator for the Toledo Alliance for the Performing Arts. For six years, Siu co-presented an annual music marathon with the Toledo Museum of Art. An enthusiastic educator, Siu is a faculty member of the Toledo Symphony School of Music and regularly works with the Toledo Symphony Youth Orchestras. He is the consulting artistic director of the Glass City Chamber Music Competition and the host of the Toledo Symphony's pre-concert conversations that

precede each Masterworks Series concert. He holds a MM from Indiana University and degrees in English and music from Montreal's McGill University.



**Chelsie Thompson** | *Mansfield, Ohio*

Chelsie Thompson is the president and CEO of the Renaissance Performing Arts Association. She holds a bachelor's degree in music performance from the Conservatory of Music at Capital University, a master's degree in arts administration from the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music, and an MBA from the University of Cincinnati's Lindner College of Business. Thompson served as a panelist at the League of Historic American Theatres' international conference in 2020 and 2021 and presented at the 2024 conference on relaxed and sensory-friendly performances. She has been featured as a

guest on NPR's "All Things Considered," serves on her local tourism board, and is a founding member of the community foundation's Mansfield Rising initiative. Passionate about nonprofits and grantwriting, Thompson has provided board and volunteer service to 12 local organizations.

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**Bronlynn Thurman** | *Akron, Ohio*

Bronlynn Thurman is a program officer focused on arts and culture at The Cleveland Foundation. In this role, she develops the organization's arts and culture strategy and advances its strategic priorities through grant review and assessment, convenings, and strategic partnerships. Prior to joining The Cleveland Foundation, Thurman served as a program officer at the GAR Foundation, where she focused on equitable community development and arts in education. She serves on the boards of several area nonprofits and commissions, including the Greater Ohio Policy Center, Akron 200, the City of Akron Planning Commission, and Akron's Bicentennial Commission. Thurman holds a master's degree in information architecture and knowledge management with a focus on user experience design and a bachelor's degree in advertising with minors in marketing and psychology from Kent State University.



**Sally Windle** | *Lima, Ohio*

As a lifelong artist, Sally Windle started her career as a visual art teacher, and after 28 years, took the position of principal and administrator in the Lima City Schools. She has been involved in arts and education throughout her career, serving on many boards for curriculum and advocacy throughout Ohio. Windle is also an art therapist and works with the Behavioral Unit patients at Mercy Health. In 2019, she became the executive director of ArtSpace/Lima, a nonprofit art center located in the heart of downtown Lima. She holds a BFA and a BS in art education from The University of Dayton; a Master of Education, Supervision, and Curriculum; and a superintendent's license. Windle is deeply committed to art and its impact on community.