



THE GAZETTE

Publication of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre

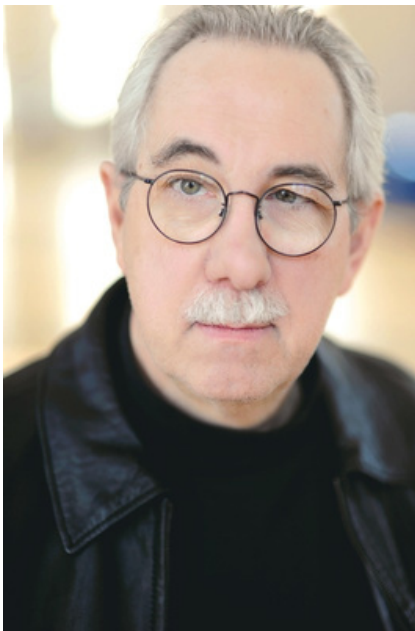
Summer 2026

*61st Annual Membership Weekend
April 11-12, 2026*



*The Curtis Hotel
Denver, Colorado*

A MILE HIGH CELEBRATION OF THEATRE



2026 Fellows Welcome from Dean David Grapes II

“Holding the Light: Theatre in a Fractured World”

Welcome to the 61st Fellows Weekend of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre here in Denver, CO.

It is good to see all of you. Truly good after the year that we have all just experienced.

When I look around this room this afternoon, I see a lifetime of work. Decades of rehearsal halls. Productions that felt as if we were soaring and others that felt like we had just stepped off a cliff. I see directors, playwrights, designers, scholars, and teachers—people who have spent their lives doing something that most of the world considers improbable and even worse yet—irrelevant.

We gather here today for the first time outside of Washington, DC to celebrate and invest the extraordinary Class of 2026 because, at some point in their lives, theatre found them. Just like it found all of us.

Or perhaps, it was we who found the theatre and its inclusive community. And once we found that special place—that home—it was impossible for us to leave. Somewhere along the way we discovered something extraordinary. We discovered that when human beings gather in a room and tell a story together, something magical happens that cannot be replicated anywhere else.

A kind of electricity. A shared breath. A moment when strangers begin to recognize themselves in one another. That's the quiet miracle of theatre. And every person in this room has dedicated a life to protecting that miracle.

Now, the world we live in today is...complicated. I don't need to tell you that. And unfortunately, we find ourselves living through another political period when the arts are misunderstood, often dismissed, and this year were pulled repeatedly into the crosscurrents of political argument. And in many places the performing arts have become entangled in the kind of polarization that leaves little room for nuance, curiosity, or listening. A year when the performing arts became a battlefield and where stories were judged “woke” even before they were heard.

But here's what my 50 years in the theatre has taught me. I'd rather be “woke” than asleep at the wheel.

Theatre has and will always be a creative force for good in complicated times. It was there in ancient Greece when democracy was still a fragile experiment. It was there in Shakespeare's England when political and religious power shifted like sand. It was there in Harlem during the Renaissance of the 1920s...in union halls and fields during the labor movement... and in church basements during the Civil Rights era. It was there in Eastern Europe during the fall of the Soviet Union.

And Theatre is ALIVE RIGHT NOW in every corner of this great nation.

Because while you can put up a few brass letters to change the name of a building, alter its columns from humble concrete to marble—YOU CANNOT DESTROY its creative soul—nor can you alter the legacy of the great president, whose passion for the arts inspired its creation.

Because theatre does something that politics cannot do. It asks us to listen. It asks us to imagine. It asks us—sometimes gently, sometimes fiercely—to see the world through someone else's eyes. To compromise. And in a nation that often feels fractured, the most radical political act that the theatre has left may be hope.

Hope. Not the loud, flashy kind. The quiet kind. The kind of hope that happens when the lights go down, and a story begins, and for two hours people sit together in the dark and remember that they belong to something larger and more vital than a political party or a social ideology—they belong to the human race.

That is what theatre does. It soothes the soul. And we need that now more than ever. The Fellows gathered in this room represent generations of artists who refused to let that light go out. You built stages where none existed. You nurtured young artists when they needed someone to believe in them. You defended the idea that storytelling matters—even when the world seemed determined to look the other way.

And now a new generation is watching us. They're sitting in rehearsal halls tonight. They're writing plays on laptops at midnight. They're building props in scene shops and wondering if any of this still matters. They're asking themselves the same question we once asked: Is theatre still worth it? Is it worth fighting for?

For me the answer is clear. Yes. Yes, it is. Because every time a playwright tells a difficult truth...Every time an actor stands onstage and risks being fully human...Every time a designer paints the sky with light...Every time a director gathers a room of strangers and says, "Let's try to make something beautiful together," the world becomes just a little more humane. A little more compassionate. A little more possible. That's not small work. That's essential work.

So, this weekend is more than a celebration of American Theatre. It's a reminder. A reminder that we are part of a long, resilient tradition of artists who refused to stop telling stories—no matter how uncertain the times. And it's also a call to action. Because theatre has never been a passive art form. It asks something of us. It asks actors to risk vulnerability. It asks playwrights to speak uncomfortable truths. It asks directors and designers to imagine worlds that do not yet exist. And it asks audiences to listen. At its best, theatre is an act of courage.

So, in this moment—when the cultural landscape feels uncertain and the arts sometimes find themselves pulled into the noise of public debate—our responsibility is not to retreat. Our responsibility is to CREATE! To create work that is thoughtful, rigorous, compassionate, and fearless. Work that reminds our communities that dialogue is still possible. Work that soothes the soul of a nation that is too often weary of listening. Because the theatre has always been more than popular entertainment. It is one of the oldest ways human beings still gather to understand themselves. And as long as there are artists—like all of you—who are willing to stand in the light and tell the truth, the theatre will endure. And so will hope.

Now I would like to leave you with the final stanza of Amanda Gorman's beautiful poem "The Hill We Climb."

For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
If only we're brave enough to be it

I look forward to seeing all of you again next April 23–25, 2027 at the Westin Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA.



David Grapes II
Dean, College of Fellows

Financial Report

Some Very Good News Regarding the College's Financial Future

Last year, the College took an important and necessary step: the introduction of annual Recommended Dues to establish a sustainable revenue stream—one that will safeguard the long-term financial health of the organization and ensure that we can continue to invest a new class of Fellows each year.

Change is never without hesitation. And yet, in the face of that, something remarkable happened.

Seventy Fellows stepped forward. Seventy individuals made a conscious decision to invest not only in the present—but in the future of the College and its mission. Their collective commitment generated more than **\$17,000 in support**, and the impact of that investment was immediate and tangible.

Because of you:

- We successfully produced our **first Fellows Weekend outside of Washington, DC.**
- We **invested nine new Fellows**, strengthening the leadership of the American theatre.
- We were able to **fully restore \$15,500** to the 4Forever endowment funds that were drawn upon during the COVID years.

And for the first time since before the pandemic, the College closed the year with **positive retained earnings of \$8,598**—a meaningful and encouraging surplus. This is more than good news. It is proof of concept. It demonstrates that when Fellows come together with shared purpose, we can not only sustain the College—we can **strengthen it, expand it, and secure its future.**

Why Does Your Continued Support Matter?

Recommended Dues are not simply a contribution. They are the **lifeblood of the College.**

They underwrite:

- The continuation of our **Annual Fellows Weekend**
- The **investiture of new Fellows**
- The preservation of our **financial stability and independence**
- Our ability to **advocate for and elevate American theatre** at a critical moment in its history

Our fiscal year runs from May 1 through April 30, and with the new cycle now underway, your 2026/2027 recommended dues are payable through the website, via PayPal, or by check.

A Call Forward

This year, our goal is clear: 80 Fellows participating. Not as an obligation—but as a collective act of stewardship. If you supported the College last year, I ask you to do so again. If you were unable to participate, I invite you—now more than ever—to join your colleagues in ensuring that this vital institution continues to thrive. The strength of the College has always resided in its Fellows.

And today, that strength is needed.

Thank you for your generosity, your belief, and your continued commitment to the mission of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

Now is the moment to act. Use the links below to pay your 2026/2027 Recommended Dues!

Financial Report cont.

In an effort to stabilize the College's finances and create a guaranteed annual revenue stream, the College of Fellow's Board has established recommended annual dues of \$250 for each current Fellow.

Dues revenue will support the expense of our annual Fellows Weekend including the investiture of new Fellows, website expenses, tax/accounting services, postage, and administrative expenses.

Dues are payable now and are good through June 2027.

Payment Options Include:

- Wix: <https://www.thecollegeoffellows.org/annual-dues>
- PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/CollegeofFellows?>
- Zelle: 970-219-4352
- Check mailed to Kristy Simpson, Administrative Assistant Email KsimpsonCOF@gmail.com for address



Treasurer Report:

Financial Reports for the 2025 FY and 2026 YTD were emailed in April and will also be posted to the website.

Total income \$81,135.81
Expenses \$72,537.66

The College had retained earnings of \$8,598.15 for calendar year 2025.

We are off to a strong start financially for 2026. We have already received \$32,750.00 in Restricted Donations and \$600 in Unrestricted Donations.

We currently have \$33,543.97 in the BoA account. However, that number does not include our hotel expenses.

We currently have \$144,711.69 in Restricted or Encumbered Funds in our Merrill Lynch Investment Account. These are endowment funds or designated to support the College's awards and the August Wilson Fellowship.

Pay it Forward – Make a Transformational Gift

Consider a Legacy Gift to the College of Fellows

The College of Fellows of the American Theatre exists today because those who came before us believed in something larger than themselves. They built an institution rooted in excellence, mentorship, and a deep commitment to the future of our art form. Now, we are called to do the same. A legacy gift is more than a financial contribution—it is a lasting affirmation of your belief in the power of theatre and in the generations who will follow us. By including the College in your estate plans, you help ensure that this vital community remains strong, vibrant, and financially secure for years to come.

Through a bequest, trust, planned gift, or IRA charitable distribution, your generosity will directly support the work that defines us: investing in new Fellows, nurturing emerging artists, expanding access to opportunity, and sustaining a national voice for the American theatre at a time when it is needed more than ever.

This is how we honor the past—by securing the future. Every legacy gift, regardless of size, becomes part of something enduring. It allows the College not only to continue, but to grow—to meet the challenges ahead with strength, vision, and purpose. We have all benefited from the wisdom, generosity, and courage of those who paved the way. A legacy gift is your opportunity to pay that forward—to leave behind not just a memory, but a meaningful and lasting impact.

To learn more, please contact davidgrapes@yahoo.com. All gifts are tax-deductible as allowed by current federal law.

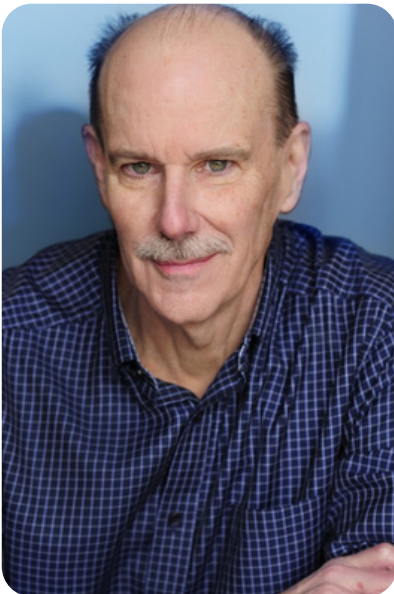


Welcome the Class of 2026



Ifa Bayeza

Ifa Bayeza is an award-winning playwright, director, composer, novelist, and educator. A finalist for the 2020 Herb Alpert Award in Theatre and the Francesca Primus Prize, she was the inaugural Humanist-in-Residence at the National Endowment for the Humanities and a 2022 MacDowell Fellow. Her creative nonfiction and fiction examine pivotal intersections of race across history and the present. Plays include the *Till Trilogy*, *String Theory*, *Infants of the Spring*, and *Ta'zieh Between Two Rivers*. Her musical *Bunk Johnson...A Blues Poem* is in workshop at Arena Stage, and her TYA comedy *Kid Zero* is in development. With her sister Ntozake Shange, she co-authored the novel *Some Sing, Some Cry*. Her newest play, *One Small Alice*, was featured at the 2024 Kennedy Center Festival of New Works. A current Fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Bayeza holds degrees from Harvard University and UMass Amherst.



Craig Carnelia

Craig Carnelia is known for his book, *The Reason to Sing: A Guide to Acting While Singing*, having taught renowned classes in New York for 25 years to some of today's finest musical theatre actors, and master classes at such universities as CCM, Elon, and Northwestern. On Broadway, he wrote the lyrics for *Sweet Smell of Success* (composer Marvin Hamlisch, bookwriter John Guare) and *Imaginary Friends* (Hamlisch and Nora Ephron). As both composer and lyricist, Craig wrote the score for *Is There Life After High School?* and contributed four songs to *Working*. Off-Broadway and regionally, he wrote *Three Postcards* at Playwrights Horizons with Craig Lucas, *Poster Boy* at Williamstown Theatre Festival, and had world premieres at the Goodman, South Coast Rep, Old Globe, and Hartford Stage. Awards include two Tony nominations, two Drama Desk nominations, two "Best Plays" citations, the Johnny Mercer Award, and the Kleban Award. He has served on the Council of The Dramatists Guild since 1995 and is married to actor/educator, Lisa Brescia.



Michael Donovan

Michael Donovan is a Los Angeles based award-winning casting director (9 Artios Awards) known for a sharp eye for talent and a collaborative, actor-first approach. Working across film, television, and new media, he partners closely with writers, directors, and producers to build authentic ensembles that serve story and tone. Michael has cast over 1000+ theatre productions for professional regional theatres across the United States as well as several national tours, the annual Hollywood Bowl musicals, numerous films, TV series, and commercials. He has also produced productions in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City. Michael has taught courses at UCLA, USC, AFI, and Pepperdine, and currently serves as the President of the Board for the Foundation for New American Musicals (FNAM) and serves on the board for Camp Bravo.

Welcome the Class of 2026



Reginald L. Douglas

Reginald L. Douglas (he/him) is a director, producer, and educator dedicated to supporting new voices, and harnessing the power of theatre to connect community members. He currently serves as the Artistic Director of Mosaic Theater Company in Washington, DC, where his leadership has supported the development and production of new and contemporary plays by acclaimed writers including Dominique Morisseau, Psalmayene 24, Erika Dickerson-Despenza, Samuel D. Hunter, Ifa Bayeza, and more. In addition, he has directed new and classic work at theatres across the country, taught at several universities, and served on the Executive Committee of the National New Play Network's Board of Directors for many years. Reginald is the recipient of the NTC's Emerging Professional Award, the Georgetown University Legacy of a Dream Award, and in 2024, he was named "Washingtonian of the Year" by *Washingtonian Magazine*.



Micha Espinosa

Micha Espinosa is an internationally recognized teaching and performing artist, scholar, director, and coach working across acting, voice, and embodied practice. She is the award-winning editor of *Monologues for Latino Actors* and co-editor of *Scenes for Latinx Actors* and *Latinx Actor Training*—honored by the International Latino Book Awards and widely adopted. Her teaching spans the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa, with an emphasis on voice and somatic practice. Over the past decade, her research has been grounded in activism, feminist praxis, border consciousness, and social and climate justice. Professor Emerita of Voice and Acting at Arizona State University, she is now Professor of Acting and Directing at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.



Patdro Harris

Patdro Harris is a director and choreographer celebrated for bold storytelling, musicality, and emotionally grounded movement. His work spans stage, film, and live events, blending cinematic visuals with precise, expressive choreography. Patdro is known for shaping performances that feel both technically sharp and deeply human, drawing out authenticity from artists at every level. He has directed extensively for such regional theatres including The Alliance Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Penumbra Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company. He choreographed the Tony Award-winning hit *A Raisin in the Sun* starring Audra McDonald and Phylicia Rashad. Early in his career, he travelled the world as choreographer and lead dancer for Stevie Wonder. He was the recipient of the 2024 President's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Welcome the Class of 2026



Allen Lee Hughes

Lighting Designer, Broadway designs include: *Home*, *Our Town*, *A Soldier's Play*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Clybourne Park*, *Having Our Say*, *Mule Bone*, *Once on this Island*, *K2*, *Strange Interlude*, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, and *Quilters*. His work has been seen at major theatres including the McCarter Theatre, Seattle Rep, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, and Mark Taper Forum. New York designs include work at Roundabout Theatre Company, New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, New York Shakespeare Festival, and Lincoln Center Theater. He is proud to have been honored with four Tony nominations, Audelco and Ovation Award nominations, Outer Critics Circle Award, Joseph Maharam Award, USITT Distinguished Achievement Award in Lighting Design, Merritt Award for Excellence in Design and Collaboration, two Helen Hayes awards, and eight other Helen Hayes nominations. He is a professor at NYU Tisch and The Fellowship Program at Arena Stage bears his name.



Anita Maynard-Losh

Anita Maynard-Losh is the former Director of Community Engagement and Senior Artistic Advisor at Arena Stage where she led the theatre's education and outreach programs and served on the artistic team from 2004 to 2023. While at Arena Stage she worked on 40 productions, as director, associate director, or vocal/dialect coach. Her acting credits include work at Perseverance, CO Shakespeare Festival, and ACT. She directed/devised multiple international productions in Croatia, India, and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Prior to joining Arena Stage, Anita served as the Associate Artistic Director and Education Director for Perseverance Theatre, where she directed a bilingual adaptation of *Macbeth* set in the Tlingit culture, which toured Alaska, and was also performed at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. She also served as the dialect coach for the 2009 Broadway production of *Ragtime*.



Chris Parnell

Chris Parnell is an accomplished television executive with more than two decades of experience in creative development and programming at Sony Pictures Television and Apple TV+. In September 2025, he stepped into his current role as Executive Vice President of Originals at Paramount+, where he oversees the development and production of all original content, including the flagship *Star Trek* franchise. Collectively, the series he has helped develop in Los Angeles have garnered 146 Emmy nominations. Chris holds a BA in Theatre Performance from the University of Colorado Boulder and an MFA in Acting from the Asolo Conservatory in Florida. Despite his prominence in the television industry, he remains deeply connected to his theatrical roots, actively mentoring emerging artists through university theatre and film programs across the Los Angeles area.

MEET THE NEW FELLOWS

Fellow Ifa Bayeza

Citation Bonnie Nelson Schwartz

It is my pleasure to nominate the multi-talented Ifa Bayeza for membership in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. An author, educator, producer, and conceptual theatre artist, Ifa is distinguished as an award-winning playwright whose work explores the intersections of race throughout history.

I first met Ifa at Mosaic Theater Company of DC in Washington, DC, where she premiered her monumental work *The Till Trilogy*, a series of plays reflecting on the life, death, and legacy of Emmett Till, whose 1955 murder remains one of the most pivotal moments in American history. *The Ballad of Emmett Till*, *Benevolence*, and *That Summer in Sumner* honor the ongoing fight for racial justice in our country, offering audiences of all ages an opportunity for collective reckoning, reflection, and response. It was unlike anything our theatre community had ever seen—ambitious and deeply emotional, forcing us to confront our roles and the hard truths of our history.

Ifa's versatility is also evident in her novel *Some Sing, Some Cry*, co-authored with her sister Ntozake Shange, which chronicles 200 years of African American music through seven generations of women. Her drama *String Theory*, written for a quartet of voices, relives the voyage of the Amistad slave ship, while the tragicomedy *Welcome to Wandaland* explores her experiences of desegregation in St. Louis following the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Her musicals include *Charleston Olio*, on the birth of the Jazz Age, and *Bunk Johnson: A Blues Poem*, based on the life of the legendary jazz trumpeter Bunk Johnson.

A graduate of Harvard University with an MFA in Theatre from University of Massachusetts Amherst, Ifa served as the inaugural Humanist-in-Residence at the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2018. She was also a finalist for both the Herb Alpert Award in Theatre and the Francesca Primus Prize in 2020.

Ifa Bayeza's generosity of spirit, collaborative nature, and inspiring presence are gifts to all of us in theatre and in life. It is my honor to welcome her to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

Fellow Craig Carnelia

Citation Dean Emerita Gail Humphries

It is my pleasure to nominate Craig Carnelia to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. Craig embodies the exceptional combination of artist and teacher, one who teaches by example through an extensive professional career. He is also the author of *The Reason to Sing: A Guide to Acting While Singing*, a widely respected book that articulates his approach to integrating acting and singing that is used extensively in universities and conservatories across the country. He is currently preparing a second edition.

His professional credits include four shows produced on Broadway. *Working* with composer Marvin Hamlisch, he wrote the lyrics for *Sweet Smell of Success*, with a book by John Guare, and *Imaginary Friends*, with Nora Ephron. As both composer and lyricist, Craig wrote the score for *Is There Life After High School?* and contributed songs to *Working*. Off Broadway, he composed the score for *Three Postcards* at Playwrights Horizons, with a book by Craig Lucas, and contributed to the revue *Diamonds*, directed by Harold Prince. Regionally, he wrote the score for *Poster Boy* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. His honors include two Tony Award nominations, two Drama Desk nominations, the Kleban Award, and the Johnny Mercer Award.

Craig's influence as a mentor and teacher is extensive. For more than three decades he has taught classes in New York for members of the Broadway community. His book and approach to integrating acting and singing are used widely at universities and conservatories, where he frequently conducts master classes. He has mentored emerging writers through the ASCAP Musical Theatre Workshop, the Dramatists Guild Foundation Musical Theatre Fellowship, and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center National Music Theater Conference. Craig also serves as resident faculty for IGNITE College Audition Project's summer intensive in Springfield, Missouri and has been a master teacher for the Johnny Mercer Foundation Songwriters Project at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee.

He is also a guest instructor across the United States teaching *Acting Through Song and Monologue*, a course he developed at the Conservatory for the Performing Arts at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. His impact on both professionals and aspiring artists has been deep and lasting. Craig Carnelia is a prolific and gifted artist-teacher, and it is my pleasure to welcome him to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



Fellow Michael Donovan

Citation by Dean David Grapes II

I first became acquainted with Michael Donovan and his work in 2005, when I hired him at the University of Northern Colorado to serve as our Los Angeles Senior Showcase consultant. He proved to be an invaluable resource to our students. In addition to his work with the University of Northern Colorado, Michael has also conducted workshops and/or served as an adjunct professor at University of California, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, American Film Institute, Pepperdine University, and Syracuse University.

Although he began his career as a performer and director, for more than three decades he has served the American theatre and film community through his distinguished work at Michael Donovan Casting, one of the busiest and most celebrated casting agencies in Southern California. Nominated 37 times, Michael is the recipient of nine Artios Awards presented by the Casting Society of America for Outstanding Achievement in Casting.

Michael has lent his talents to more than 1,000 theatre productions at such venues as the Hollywood Bowl, Ahmanson Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Kirk Douglas Theatre, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Pasadena Playhouse, Laguna Playhouse, Ebony Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Arizona Theatre Company, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and Troubadour Wembley Park in London. These productions have afforded him the opportunity to collaborate with directors such as Susan Stroman, Jerry Mitchell, Sheldon Epps, Walter Bobbie, Joe Mantello, Kathleen Marshall, Israel Hicks, Scott Schwartz, Jason Alexander, B. D. Wong, and Oz Scott.

Appearing in these productions were theatre and film luminaries such as Tom Hanks, Al Pacino, Kenneth Branagh, Julia Roberts, Neil Patrick Harris, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Kristen Bell, Harvey Fierstein, Alfred Molina, Laurence Fishburne, Angela Bassett, William Shatner, Martin Sheen, Keanu Reeves, Martin Short, Robin Williams, and Billy Crystal, among many others.

His casting work also includes the national tours of *The Secret Garden*, *Bright Star*, *An Act of God*, *Annie*, *Mamma Mia!*, *A Chorus Line*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Spamalot*, *Hair*, *Chicago*, *The Producers*, *Amadeus*, *Hairspray*, *Rent*, *South Pacific*, and *The Magic Flute*, as well as numerous films, television series, and more than a thousand television commercials.

Michael continues to produce theatre in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. He currently serves as President of the Board of the Foundation for New American Musicals and sits on the Board of Directors for Camp Bravo. Michael is an exceptional man of the theatre, and it is my honor to welcome him to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

Fellow Reginald L. Douglas

Citation by Bonnie Nelson Schwartz

It is my pleasure to nominate Reginald L. Douglas for membership in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

I first met Reg in 2022 as he introduced his inaugural season as the new Artistic Director of Mosaic Theater Company of DC in Washington, DC. This dynamic and articulate young director held the audience in thrall as he presented his first season and flagship project—the world premiere of the groundbreaking *Emmett Till Trilogy*. Reg's passion and commitment to new plays and new voices were inspiring and exciting. He was about to take over not only Mosaic Theater but also Washington, DC, and we were ready to join his mission.

Reg first arrived in Washington, DC as a student at Georgetown University, intent on pursuing a political career. He soon discovered that theatre could be a powerful tool for change. "That was the aha moment," Reg says. "I could combine my love of theatre with my love of civic engagement and use theatre as a catalyst to make the change I want to see in the world."

Today, at age 37, Reginald Douglas has developed and directed more than 70 productions at theatres nationwide. He has facilitated partnerships with local and national community leaders, universities, and organizations, and has commissioned artists of color to create work reflecting and responding to the Black Lives Matter movement. He has also developed and led national fellowships and training programs for emerging arts leaders.

After teaching at The New School, Carnegie Mellon University, Boston University, University of Missouri–Kansas City, Point Park University, and University of Pittsburgh, Reg has also returned to Georgetown University as a guest lecturer in directing and producing.

That "aha moment" has now come full circle. It is my honor to welcome Reginald Douglas to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



Fellow Micha Espinosa

Citation by Baron Kelly

It is my pleasure to nominate Micha Espinosa for induction into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. I first met Professor Espinosa in 2017 while attending the 2017 Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) Conference in Boston, Massachusetts. At that conference, Professor Espinosa gave a presentation on cultural inclusiveness in voice training for acting students. Drawing from her personal history and expertise as a Chicana theatre artist and actor, she examines and contextualizes the experiences of Hispanics in theatre and film, linking actor training with politics, pedagogy, identity development, and ethics.

Micha Espinosa is the award-winning editor of *Monologues for Latino Actors: A Resource Guide to Contemporary Latino/a Playwrights* and the co-editor of *Scenes for Latinx Actors*. She also co-edited the award-winning *Latinx Actor Training* (Routledge), along with numerous book chapters, reviews, and articles that contribute to the discourse on representation and performance.

As the inaugural Artistic Director of the Fitzmaurice Voicework Institute, she has taught globally across the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa, training more than 360 designated teachers and creating specialized programs. Professor Espinosa has also delivered more than 100 master classes in voice and liberation practices, given over 50 conference presentations, and appeared on leading podcasts, including those produced by Folger Shakespeare Library, *In a Manner of Speaking*, and *The Theatre of Others*.

I can think of no better person to be considered as a candidate for induction as a Fellow in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. She now joins the ranks of distinguished Fellows such as Jorge Huerta and Jose Gonzalez Cruz. It is therefore my privilege to welcome Micha to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



Fellow Patdro Harris

Citation by Dean David Grapes II

Patdro Harris is a nationally recognized director and choreographer. Patdro choreographed the Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of *A Raisin in the Sun*, directed by Kenny Leon and starring Audra McDonald and Phylicia Rashad. He also wrote and directed the Off-Broadway production of *The Love Show*, starring T. C. Carson. In addition, he served as choreographer and movement specialist for the world premiere of the opera *Margaret Garner*, with a libretto by Toni Morrison.

His regional theatre credits include productions at Indiana Repertory Theatre, Penumbra Theatre, Hattiloo Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Syracuse Stage, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mixed Blood Theatre, Portland Playhouse, The Ensemble Theatre, Theatrical Outfit, Sacramento Theatre Company, Studio Theatre, Michigan Opera Theatre, Connecticut Repertory Theatre, Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Round House Theatre, and True Colors Theatre Company.

He has also shared his talents as a choreographer, artistic consultant, and movement director with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, City Theatre Company, Jomandi Productions, the National Black Theatre Festival, Guthrie Theater, Portland Center Stage, and the National Black Arts Festival.

In addition to his extensive work in professional theatre, Patdro has been active in academic theatre, leading workshops and master classes and directing and choreographing productions at Florida State University, Howard University, Syracuse University, Boston University, Florida A&M University, and the University of Northern Colorado.

As a performer, Patdro traveled the world as choreographer and lead dancer for the legendary Stevie Wonder and worked with artists such as The S.O.S. Band, Daryl Coley, Yolanda Adams, and India Arie. He has also served the profession as a member of the Georgia Council for the Arts and on the Advisory Dance Panel for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

His awards and honors include the 1996 Helen Hayes Award for Best Choreography, the 2002 Drammy Award for Best Choreography, the 2007 Dance Ministry Magazine Trailblazer Award for Dance Choreographer of the Year, four Georgia Theatre Awards for Best Director, the 2009 Suzi Bass Award for Outstanding Choreography, and the 2013 and 2019 Suzi Bass Awards for Outstanding Director of a Play. In 2024, he received the President's Lifetime Achievement Award under President Joe Biden.

It is my honor to welcome my friend Patdro Harris to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

Fellow Allen Lee Hughes

Citation by Kathy Perkins

Allen Lee Hughes has earned national and international recognition for his achievements in lighting design across theatre and dance. Over the course of a distinguished career, he has designed more than a dozen Broadway productions, including *Our Town*, *Having Our Say*, *A Soldier's Play*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Once on This Island*, *Clybourne Park*, *Mule Bone*, and *K2*. His extensive regional theatre credits include work with McCarter Theatre Center, Mark Taper Forum, Long Wharf Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Goodman Theatre, Hartford Stage, Alliance Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Lincoln Center Theater, and Seattle Repertory Theatre, among many others.

In dance, Hughes has collaborated with several of the world's leading companies, including American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, and the Eliot Feld Ballet, where he maintained a long-standing artistic relationship beginning in the 1980s. Hughes' work in dance demonstrated the same sensitivity to movement, atmosphere, and narrative that distinguishes his theatre designs.

His honors include the LIT Lifetime Achievement Award (2024), the Henry Hewes Ming Cho Lee Lifetime Achievement Award (2020), four Tony Award nominations, two Helen Hayes Awards, the Joseph Maharam Award, an Outer Critics Circle Award, the USITT Distinguished Achievement Award in Lighting Design (2003), the National Black Theatre Festival Outstanding Achievement in Lighting Design Award (2015), and the Michael Merritt Award for Excellence in Design and Collaboration (1997). Together these accolades reflect his profound and sustained contributions to the American theatre.

Hughes began his professional career in Washington, D.C., earning his B.A. from The Catholic University of America and joining Arena Stage in 1969 as an electrician, eventually rising to associate designer. In 1990, Arena Stage Artistic Director Zelda Fichandler established the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship in his honor. Since then, the program has provided more than 700 young artists with professional training and mentorship in artistic and technical production, arts administration, education, and community outreach. After relocating to New York City, Hughes earned his MFA from New York University Tisch School of the Arts, where he later returned as a professor and continues to mentor emerging designers. His commitment to education and mentorship has influenced generations of theatre artists across the country.

As a lighting designer, Hughes is a master storyteller. His work amplifies the dramatic narrative rather than calling attention to technology or effect. His lighting for the Broadway production of *K2* remains a vivid example. Working with the renowned set designer Ming Cho Lee, Hughes created subtle yet powerful shifts in color, angle, and intensity that conveyed time, atmosphere, and emotional tension with remarkable clarity.

Given his extraordinary achievements as a designer, educator, and mentor, it is my honor to welcome Allen Lee Hughes to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

Fellow Anita Maynard Losh

Citation by Molly Smith

Anita Maynard-Losh is a superstar.

She created a dynamic Community Engagement Department at Arena Stage, including Camp Arena Stage, which has served hundreds of students, and a professional musical theatre program for teenagers.

Anita trained at American Conservatory Theater (ACT) and worked as an actor for many years before beginning a career in directing. Among her notable projects was a production of *Macbeth* performed entirely in the Tlingit (Native Alaskan) language, which traveled from Juneau, Alaska to Washington, DC. She also toured Alaska for many years performing Shakespeare in small, remote villages with her acting partner. She is a gifted teacher and a wonderful colleague.

Anita is highly skilled as a vocal coach, text director, and accent coach. She is knowledgeable about every area of the theatre, from stagecraft to board governance to development and communications.

She is smart, deeply committed, and full of ideas about the future of theatre. She recently retired from Arena Stage after serving for twenty years as Director of Community Engagement and a senior member of the staff. Before that, she was a longtime staff member at Perseverance Theatre in Juneau, Alaska.

I have been fortunate to watch her in action for more than four decades, and I cannot recommend her highly enough.

You will find her a joy.

I am delighted to welcome Anita as a colleague in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



Fellow Chris Parnell

Citation by Dean David Grapes II

Chris Parnell is an experienced television executive with more than two decades in creative development and programming. He is widely known for championing bold new ideas and developing high-profile original series across multiple streaming and broadcast platforms. Chris also enjoys a reputation for hiring performers and other creatives with strong academic theatre training backgrounds. In September 2025, Chris assumed his current position as Executive Vice President of Originals at Paramount+, where he oversees the development and production of original content.

Chris came to Paramount after five years at Apple TV+, where he served as Senior Creative Director. There, he led development for the Apple Vision Pro immersive series *Adventure* and helped develop scripted series including *For All Mankind*, *Bad Monkey*, *Dark Matter*, and *Neuromancer*.

Prior to that, Chris spent sixteen years at Sony Pictures Television, where he served as Co-Head of U.S. Drama Development and Programming before being promoted in 2017 to Co-President of Sony Pictures Television Studios. During his tenure at Sony, he built a remarkable legacy developing numerous hit shows, including *Breaking Bad*—winner of twelve Primetime Emmy Awards—as well as *Outlander*, *Better Call Saul*, *Preacher*, *Timeless*, *Masters of Sex*, *Damages*, and *The Blacklist*. All told, the shows he developed while at Sony received over 146 Emmy nominations.

Chris holds a BA in Theatre Performance from University of Colorado at Boulder where he not only performed in university productions but also with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. He later earned an MFA in Acting from the Asolo Conservatory in Florida, where one of his directors and mentors was College Fellow Dr. Brant Pope. While in Sarasota, he appeared in productions for the Asolo Theatre mainstage.

Although he is now a major player in Hollywood, Chris has never forgotten his theatre roots. He served as a guest artist for 8 years in the School of Theatre Arts and Dance at the University of Northern Colorado. In addition, he has also volunteered his time to serve as a guest artist for the University of Colorado at Boulder and continues to work with several university theatre and film programs in the LA area.

It is my honor to welcome Chris Parnell to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

Formal Invocation for 2026

Saturday Reception

By Randy Reinholz

An Invocation — a moment to breathe together

Let's take a breath.

· BREATHE

With this next breath, please invoke that which brings you calm, peace, and wonder.

· BREATHE

We hope our time together brings insights and strength to make bold, life-changing work.

We seek moments to reconnect to the joys that first caused us to enter this field.

We work for changes that make our craft significant in this chaotic era.

· BREATHE

Here we are in the Mile High City, Denver, which sits on the ancestral lands of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and these lands that were also the traditional territory of the Cheyenne and Arapaho People.

While recognizing the difficult history Native peoples have faced during the attempted annihilation of our communities from US land, we can also celebrate the resiliency of Indigenous people, the traditions, and the wisdom, which remain vital to our culture today.

Let this be a breath of celebration of all the people who make our lives richer, so that we can continue to strive for a better future for the next generation.

· BREATHE

Let's lift the warriors that strive to keep us safe and all the populations currently under attack by the US government.

· BREATHE

Let's lift educators and artists who share so willingly and profoundly impact our world. They show up, speak truth, and use their platforms to pass on what they know. These vital leaders encourage us as we dream of what might be, to act with purpose, to create a better, richer, and more sustainable earth.

· BREATHE

Thank you.

SATURDAY ROUNDTABLE



John Moore is a longtime Colorado theatre arts journalist, editor, and storyteller whose work has documented and celebrated the state's performing arts community for decades. Best known as the former lead theatre critic for *The Denver Post*, Moore reviewed thousands of productions and helped elevate regional theatre through thoughtful criticism, in-depth features, and artist profiles. He currently writes for the *Denver Gazette* and is the Founder and President of the Denver Actor's Fund.



Chris Coleman is the Artistic Director of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts' Theatre Company, a role he has held since late 2017. Before joining the DCPA, Coleman spent 18 transformative years as Artistic Director of Portland Center Stage in Oregon. His commitment to nurturing new voices led to the development of dozens of new plays that went on to productions across the U.S. and U.K. A veteran director, Coleman has staged work at major theatres nationwide.



Corinne Melon is currently the Managing Director of Phamaly Theatre—an award-winning organization that exclusively casts artists with disabilities. She is also an arts administrator, vocal coach, and opera stage director dedicated to bringing equity to the arts and advocating for performers. Prior to working at Phamaly, she served as the Executive Director for the Arapahoe Philharmonic. Corinne also founded and served as the Executive Artistic Director of Denver Immersive Opera, a company dedicated to supporting female-identifying and LGBTQAI+ artists. She has also served as the Production Manager for Boulder Opera Company and Company Manager for Boulder Music Institute.



Tony Garcia has served as Executive Artistic Director of Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center since 1989, having joined the company in 1972. A nationally recognized playwright and director, he has written and produced more than forty original works, many in collaboration with composer Daniel Valdez. His acclaimed productions include *Enrique's Journey*, *El Sol de Tú Eres*, and *Westside Oratorio*. Garcia is the recipient of a United States Artists Fellowship and was named 2010 Theatre Person of the Year by *The Denver Post*. He serves on the board of National Association of Lat Badge Color Codes.

The Orlin Corey Toast
Dean Emeritus Dan Carter
Denver, Colorado

In 1994, our tenth dean first raised a glass to all Fellows of the College, past and present, thus inspiring what has become an annual tradition. Each year, with an elfin twinkle in his eye, Orlin reminded us that: “underneath the resonance of professional titles and the warmth of academic regalia we all still wear motley.” We thank Orlin for this gift, as we remember those Fellows who have passed on since last we met.

R. Keith Michael

Alan Woods

Michael Dinwiddie

“Quiet consummation have and renowned be thy grave.”

In this time, it's beguiling to think of ourselves as a diasporic community wandering the desert, biding our time until we can return to our ancestral home. But the American theatre is no barren landscape. It's verdant with oases of inspiration. Nor is any specific location our one true home. There is no Mecca or Jerusalem for which we are bound. No Shangri La or Avalon or Wakanda that binds us geographically. Rather, we are pilgrims who—like many wanderers—hope to one day return to the place of their birth; not out of obligation or desperation, but in joyful celebration. In the meantime, we are heartened by the belief that whenever and wherever we gather on the two boards of our shared mythos, our passions will soar and our fellowship will thrive. This is the covenant that forms our bond.

Friends and colleagues, raise a glass to the abiding health of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



Dan Carter
April 11, 2026



R. Keith Michael



Allen Woods



Michael Dinwiddie



Sunday Investiture Invocation


By Brant Pope

We come together at this moment in our nation's history when many of us are struggling with feelings of despair and disgust and perhaps, hopelessness. After a recent "No Kings" rally, an inter-faith service was held, and the organizers asked an Episcopal priest to offer a public prayer for the Nation.

He first asked a musician to sing "The Flower that Shattered the Stone" written by Joe Henry. He quoted Henry as saying: "the lyrics intend to say that no matter how brutal the worst parts of our nature—what appears fragile and delicate, what is most vulnerable in us and what is most precious about us as living creatures is love and ultimately love must prevail. The flower of love will shatter the stone—be those stones political power, greed, corporate power, individual ego, what have you. But I have to believe that the flower in the end, will prevail."

The priest then offered this prayer:

We gather together today in grief and anger
But also in hope
As so many before us have done.
Hope for the human story
Hope for the human dream
And in my faith tradition
Manifested in the life and dream of Jesus.
We remember the urgency of his teaching
For then and for now;
His insistence that we affirm
The love within all people
And that we harness the power of that love
To create a human community characterized by
Justice, compassion, forgiveness, and sharing.
We acknowledge
The cost of moving against
The heavy stones we encounter in life
The personal effort needed
For the flower within each of us
To reveal its power and strength,
We pray that the flower within each of us
Will bud forth and bloom
Graciously, attractively,
Strongly and delightfully.
May its power shatter the stones
We face in our lives
May it lift us up.
May it paint us a rainbow without any end
And light our way home.





The Roger L. Stevens Address

“Defending the Gatekeepers”

by Chris Parnell

It is a profound honor to stand before you this afternoon to deliver the 2026 Roger L. Stevens Address. I am deeply grateful to Dean David Grapes and the Board of Directors for giving me the opportunity to share some time this afternoon with such a distinguished community of artists and leaders. I'm so impressed by the investiture class this afternoon, and lucky to be in your orbit today. David: thank you for being such a supportive presence in my Hollywood journey. I'm blessed to know you, and grateful for your guidance and support.

To be invited to speak among those who have shaped, sustained, and elevated the American theatre is pretty darn humbling and inspiring. And as foul a mouth as we have in the Hollywood entertainment industry, I promise to keep my remarks today to only one four-letter word.

You'll know it when you hear it. I take a lot of meetings. I think I learned early that a good idea can come from anywhere. Back in 2012, I was taking a general meeting with a producer I'd never met before. Pretty straightforward stuff. I've taken a million of these meetings. At the time I was working at Sony Pictures Television in Drama Development, where my job was basically to be a mid-level “truffle snuffer”. Hunt out ideas from capable producers, writers, and show-runners, and if it was something we thought we could help produce, we'd make a deal with the writer, work on the project and the pitch to get it into shape, and package it with the right team so that it would be enticing for a network to take a chance on buying a pilot script that might... just might... make it through the crucible of television development to one day become an on-air series.

At that time, the broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox) would buy about 50 drama projects out of the hundreds of pitches they heard every year. Then they'd maybe shoot eight or ten pilots, and only a handful of those would actually make it onto the fall schedule. So a lot of what we did was hear as many ideas as we could, filter quickly, and hope we were right.

In that meeting, the producer rattled off a dozen or so ideas he'd been thinking about to see if I was interested. We danced around for about 45 minutes, and as he was wrapping up, he said, “Y'know, I have one more idea... just a notion I've been kicking around.”

I'm going to pitch you the hook of the television show briefly now... just a little “elevator pitch”, here goes: the number one name on the FBI's Most Wanted list—a notorious power broker for the world's baddest bad dudes—mysteriously strolls into FBI headquarters in D.C. and turns himself in. He offers to give up everybody he has ever worked with, if and only if he can partner with a young FBI agent who just started her first day at the bureau this morning. Who is she? What's his relationship to her? No idea. But I told him to hang on, let's riff on that (my favorite part of TV development is that it's improv jazz.)

As it happened, I already had a script deal with a gifted writer I liked a lot named Jon Bokenkamp. We'd come up short on his first pitch into the marketplace, so I was sitting there with a great writer under a deal (which is a polite way of saying I was on the clock to find him an idea). I told this producer, also named John, about the deal, and it turned out he knew writer Jon. I said, “Well, give him a call. See what he thinks.” Producer John called me the next week and said Writer Jon wants to call it *The Blacklist*. Sure. Whatever.

Roger L. Stevens Address cont.

So Producer John spoke with his boss, legendary feature producer and third John: John Davis (Denver native and fellow Broncos obsessive... Go Broncos), and the three Johns and I packaged up a showrunner to take it out to market. Seemed silly not to find another John, so we attached John Eisendrath and the four Johns and I sold the idea to NBC. 218 episodes later, *The Blacklist*, starring James Spader, Megan Boone, and Harry Lennix cemented itself as one of the longest-running broadcast series on television. Why, after all the ideas that producer pitched me that day, did I land on *The Blacklist*? I've thought about that question a lot. A good idea can come from anywhere. There just has to be someone to listen to it.

For years, I could never really explain to my parents what I did for a living. They're here today, along with my aunt, and I'm very grateful they are and fortunate they were so supportive of their son as he muddled around to finally find a career in the arts.

I don't blame them for not really knowing what I do; historically, television executives don't get their names in the credits. That's the trade-off in our industry. I have a relatively stable job and a contract, but the incredibly talented people I have the honor to work with every day... the writers, producers, actors, directors, production designers, set decorators, costumers, composers, and caterers... they're working gig to gig. They don't always know when the next job is coming.

They get their names in the credits. Deservedly so. A few years ago, I was on the phone with my mother, and after some thought, she surprised me by saying, "I think I know what you are now. I think you're an artist." I thanked her, and we moved on, but I've struggled with that ever since. An artist?

I've seen too many films and shows about the movie business from *Sunset Boulevard* to *Swimming with Sharks* and *The Player* (we love making shows about ourselves). And what I've learned from those films is that I'm a suit. A gatekeeper. I answer to a corporation. Just like many of you here answer to institutions, boards, donors, subscribers. We help keep the entertainment engine running, and if it doesn't get funded, it doesn't run. So I find myself caught in a conundrum that I'm willing to bet a lot of my fellow gatekeepers in this room share: How do we make art that will fund more art?

And note that I called it art. Not content. We don't make content. Content is for cat videos. I am blessed, and I do not take it for granted for one day, to work with artists. They make art. Doesn't make me an artist though.

The fact that I'm even debating a question about how to fund art is bananas, because I didn't set out to be a gatekeeper. I don't particularly like suits. Business affairs negotiations frustrate me. On an easy day, I field dozens of calls from agents with new pitches, writers and producers for me to meet, materials to read, projects to consider.

I hate saying no. In the last five years alone, I've passed on more than 2,000 pitches heard, scripts read, or meetings taken. Out of that, I've probably said yes to around fifty. I didn't set out to be a gatekeeper. I started out as an actor. I received my BA in Acting from the University of Colorado, where I was lucky enough to do two seasons on the Mary Rippon at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. From there, I was fortunate to get admitted into the MFA program at Florida State University's Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training by Brant Pope, who is sitting here next to my parents.

The methodology that underscored Brant and his team's teaching style was the Meisner Technique. If I hear some groans out there, it's because you know. You know. It ain't easy. It is emotionally draining. But what Brant, over the course of three years, installed onto the top of my head was an antenna to really listen. Acting is reacting, and if you aren't listening, you aren't acting. Anybody can memorize a speech, perfect it in the mirror, and deliver it by rote. The real challenge is to listen on stage, in front of people, with no emotional safety net, and react honestly to that. Brant taught me to listen.

And it turns out that's the first step in gatekeeping. I listen for a living. I listen to pitches. Television ideas that might become series. Story-time daily from creative visionaries. And then I evaluate whether that idea, translated into an actual program on your TV at home, would be tonally and creatively right (and make a profit) for the company that employs me. It is certainly not all my decision. None of us do this alone. Programming a TV slate is a team sport. It involves an army of Olympic-level superstars from marketing, communications, finance, operations, production, casting, distribution. I am inspired daily by the absolute ballers I work with. But as one of the executives who catches the pitch first, I listen to the idea in its most fragile form. And like many of the gatekeepers in this room, I have to hold a lot of things in my head all at once.

Over time, I realized that when I hear a pitch, I'm running it through several filters. The first is the practical one: can we make it? Tom Rothman, the Chairman of Sony Pictures Features, has a mantra he drills into his team: "Creatively reckless, fiscally responsible." Sticks in your head, doesn't it? "Creatively reckless, fiscally responsible." Can this idea actually be produced on a television budget? Can it sustain itself over multiple episodes? And can we deliver on the promise of the premise every week at a level that doesn't disappoint the audience?

Roger L. Stevens Address cont.

Television is intimate. Full of producible scenes with series regulars on standing sets, which is usually pretty cost-effective. That's one of the reasons I love it so much. It falls on the writer to run the show, because it's on them to keep you hooked on an episodic budget. My favorite writers in all of literature are television writers. Their lineage goes back to radio, which had to burn through plot and cliffhangers to keep you listening through the commercials. But what really kept you coming back from the Maxwell House ads wasn't just the plot. It was the relationships.

Radio writers figured out that if you built characters people cared about, they'd show up again and again just to spend time with them, and when television came along, it was just a new toy for writers. The engine stayed the same. So that's the secret: for a very long time, television didn't have to be that expensive. It was designed to be experienced once and then disappear into memory.

As the business evolved, from syndication to streaming, the ambition grew. Bigger scale, higher cost, more competition for attention. Television is having to compete more for less eyeballs by increasing production value, scope and scale. Sometimes it works beautifully. But sometimes the whiz-bang of technology and visual effects pulls us away from the core strength of the television medium: characters, in your home, that you have invested years of time with. So the first filter is simple: can we make it, and can we make it in a way that honors what makes television unique?

The second filter is the audience. Is it something they want? Well... before you can answer that, let's ask a much harder question: Who exactly are "they"? Because "the audience" used to feel like a single thing that we could quantify. A number you could chase by reading the Nielsen ratings. But we're now seeing a massive audience shift in television—they don't sit down at 8 o'clock and wait to be told what's on anymore.

Today it's fractured. Social media has been able to deliver you short form content that's perfectly, algorithmically curated for one audience: you. Increasingly, we're faced with audiences having to choose to experience longform entertainment over the dopamine hits of bite-sized algorithmic appetizers. And most folks have a TV in their home, so I can only imagine how hard it is to get them off their couches and into a seat at live theatre.

So sure, let's do our market research, and go talk to them. What is the audience that we are trying to cultivate? And what stories do they say they want?

But if it were that simple, if success were just a matter of asking people what they want and handing it back to them... well, every show would be a hit. However, we're not professional photocopiers. Because what people say they want, and what they actually respond to... are not always the same thing. The good news is: this is a skill that can be learned—we just have to know how to translate:

During times of societal change and instability, our first instinct is to deliver lightness. Comedy. I've found that those are band-aid fixes. What they're really looking for... is comfort. A world where problems get solved. Where the bad guy gets the cuffs put on and the good guy is saved by the smart lawyer.

During times of routine... of sameness... when life starts to feel a little too predictable, our instinct is to give them more of the same to keep it going. But what they're really looking for... is surprise. A story they aren't living at home. Seeing others live a life of danger and adventure.

During times of isolation... when people feel increasingly set apart from each other... our instinct is to go bigger. Louder. More spectacle. But what they're really looking for... is connection. A character on TV who shares their values. Someone who helps them feel less alone.

These aren't stories, or feelings, that you can get in 8 seconds. These aren't itches that can be scratched by social media. This is a deeper connection to the art, and one that takes time to absorb. That's our focus. How are we going to get them to watch more than 8 seconds? Well, we must make them curious enough to find out what happens at 10 seconds. And then the hour after that. No pressure.

This is existential for us, fellow gatekeepers. And that's what makes it worth doing. We're the ones who have to figure this out. Because once we've figured out how to make something, and decided who it's for, then the real responsibility begins...

Roger L. Stevens Address cont.

The third filter: What is this saying? Because whether we like it or not, all programming carries values. Even the ones we describe as “just entertainment.” There is no such thing as a neutral story. Every show is a representation of an artists’ vision and point of view. Their take on what is admirable, what is to be ridiculed, what is unacceptable, what is edgy, what is possible. The artist is always, in some way, opening themselves up for us to share in their imagination and see through their eyes.

So the question is not whether I have an ethical responsibility as a gatekeeper. I absolutely do. The question is: what do I do with that responsibility?

Which brings me to something I’ve come to believe very strongly: Advocacy without ego. We’re are not the author. We’re the steward. I’ve seen too many projects get flattened and the rough edges that made it distinctive and challenging get shaved off because it didn’t fit inside the box. I must have the empathy to understand what is actually being said, and if it doesn’t fit inside the box that I’ve been tasked to build, it’s my job to say no now and not string on talent. I’ve sadly made that mistake a few too many times.

The hard part is saying yes. Because then it’s my job is to identify what is essential, protect it, and help the rest evolve. Because if nobody is protecting the soul of the thing, then what you wind up with is something that fits but no longer matters. Death by a thousand well meaning notes.

And sometimes, advocacy without ego means protecting the project not because it serves a convenience, or even because it serves the company’s immediate interest, but because it serves the truth of the piece. I remember one of the first times I really had to do that.

We had a greenlight to produce *Outlander*, a Scottish historical romance, and we were trying to figure out where to film it. The production team came in with all the reasonable options. New Zealand had rolling hills. Bulgaria had infrastructure. Prague had both. There were arguments for each. Sound stages. Crews. Predictability. The whole practical menu. And I said, “Folks, we gotta film it in Scotland.” They looked at me like I had lost my mind. They said, “Chris, there is no filming infrastructure in Scotland. There are no sound stages. There are talented crews... but none that have mounted a production at this level. We are going to have to trainup a local workforce. It’s rainy. It gets dark early. The bugs are awful. I mean, have you seen the bugs?” I said, “We’re filming it in Scotland.” Because Scotland was not just the backdrop of that series. Scotland was a character. Scotland is number three on the call sheet. It’s Claire, then Jamie, and then Scotland.

So we built the infrastructure where there wasn’t one. We found an abandoned factory and got to work. And over time, what was once an argument against filming there became one of the legacies of the show. Today, the Scottish production infrastructure is vibrant and deep. The stages are humming. More than one show can shoot there at the same time. There are hundreds of people who now work in film and television in Scotland because *Outlander* helped build a production base and train local talent there.

Now, that’s not a story about executive heroics. As I’ve said, TV is a team sport. No greater example than the fact that there would be no *Outlander* if not for my secret development executive Annie Parnell, my wife. A good idea can come from anywhere, and my first test audience is always my family. Advocacy without ego allowed me to recognize what is essential to the creative identity of a project and refuse to let the rough edges get shaved off.

And once I had language for that, I began to find my own voice. The antenna was working. Now I was listening... to myself. Which brings me back to *The Blacklist*. Why did I say yes to that pitch, after hearing a dozen other ideas that day? Why that one? Because at some point, after all the analysis and all the framework and all the checkboxes and discipline, the final filter...is instinct.

And over the years, out of all the advice I’ve ever been given in this business, the line that I use the most is this: When you hear an idea, it’s either “Fuck yes” or “No thank you.” Told you I’d get to that four-letter word. Maybe that’s the art. So, does that make me an artist? I don’t know. I still work for corporations. I still sit in budget meetings. I still take too many calls. I still spend a lot of my life in rooms where art and commerce are taking the fight to the mats. But I listen. I’ve found the art in that.

Maybe my mother was onto something. Thanks Mom. So to my fellow gatekeepers: Listen for the voice inside the noise. Protect those rough edges. That’s the good stuff. Make room for artists to do their best work and build a wall around them. Protect. Nurture. Trust their vision but inspire them when you know they can do better. Keep your standards high and courage up. Know your audience well enough to challenge them honestly. Know your institution well enough to serve it fearlessly. And if we do it well, we help make art that funds more art. Listen. And when the right idea comes in — have the courage to say yes. Or, more precisely: Fuck yes.

News and Announcements

The Board Welcomes our Dean-elect and Two New Board Members

In a March electronic vote, the Fellows elected Heather Nathans as Dean-Elect and Baron Kelly and Ed Simpson to serve three-year terms on the Board of Directors.



Heather Nathans
Invested 2023



Baron Kelly
Invested 2022



Ed Simpson
Invested 2023

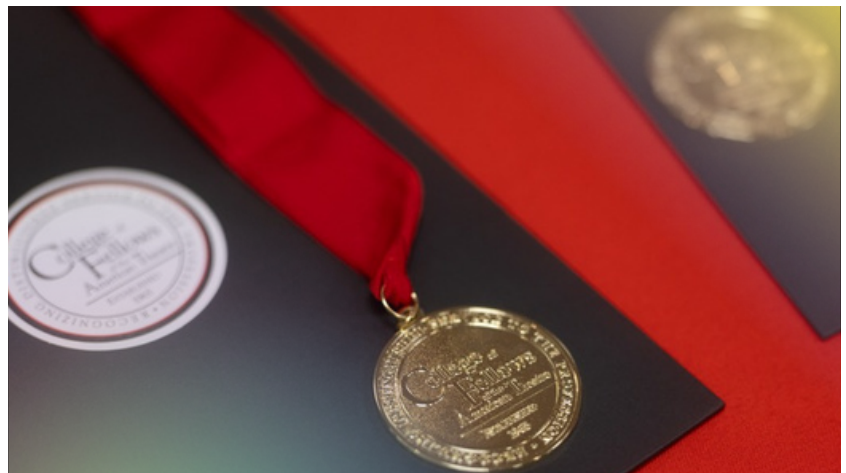
Save the Date for Fellows Weekend April 2027



The Class of 2027 will be inducted at the
62nd Annual Membership meeting
April 23-25, 2027
Westin Hotel Pittsburgh, PA

Class of 2027 Nominees

Dr. Aaron Anderson	Lynne Kurdzeil-Formato
Jan Du Plain	Emily Mann
Gary Garrison	Susan Mickey
Stephen McKinley Henderson	Phylicia Rashad
Cameron Jackson	Saul Rubinek
Kate Snodgrass	



The College of Fellows recognizes the 2026 Scholarship Award Winners

The John Cauble Emerging Producer/Leader Award is given in memory of Fellow John Cauble. As Dean, Karen Berman assisted in developing and establishing this award. Fellow Thomas Schumacher funded this award in memory of his mentor John Cauble for a ten year period through two \$50,000 donations over two years. An award of \$5,000.00 is given to two individuals each year as part of the National Awards Ceremony following the finalist auditions of the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarships. The awardees are chosen by Victoria Nolan and Kelvin Dinkins Jr. of The Yale School of Drama, the leaders of the ASPIRE Arts Leadership Institute, a partnership with LORT. The awardees are underrepresented undergraduate theatre students from across the nation who have been selected through a regional professional development process to participate in the ASPIRE program on the National level. The student recipients also receive personal mentorship from Thomas Schumacher.

John Cauble Emerging Artist Award



Aliya Nicole Edwards (she/they) is a theatre artist pursuing an undergraduate degree in Theatre at CUNY Brooklyn College. Dedicated to fostering inclusive environments and bringing high-quality theatre to low-income communities, Aliya serves as a Student Assistant House Manager at the Tony Award-winning New Victory Theater. She holds an Associate's degree in Theatre from CUNY LaGuardia Community College and previously served as a resident intern for the Labyrinth Theater Company. In 2026, she served as the ASM for the award-nominated short play, *The Waiting Room*. Upon graduation, Aliya plans to collaborate with organizations that share her vision. In her free time, she enjoys playing video games and spending time with her dog, Prince.



Wyn Alyse Thomas is a writer, theatre artist, and administrator graduating from the University of Georgia this May with her Theatre BA and Nonprofit Management & Leadership MA. She seeks to use theatre to drive social change, with a passion for stories led by complex female and queer characters. She has worked with ENOUGH! Plays to End Gun Violence, the Blank Theatre, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Ring of Keys, and more. She is a nationally recognized playwright with work published by Concord Theatricals: *stand. Up. HIT!* and *Write Their Wrongs* and Next Stage Press —*Commitment Issues: A Musical*. Other credits include *First Semester: A Musical* (2nd Place National Student Playwriting Award: ACTF, Semifinalist: SheATL), *Scared* (National Semifinalist: ACTF, Nuevas Voces Festival, Finalist: ENOUGH!), and *Prior Engagement* (Barter Theatre CPF, Midwest Dramatists Conference). She plans to relocate to New York City after graduation to work in nonprofit theatre that moves hearts and breaks barriers. wynalysethomas.com

The College of Fellows Jane Alexander Emerging Artist Award is given to one actor or actress chosen from the Irene Ryan finalists at the ACTF national festival. Fellow Bonnie Nelson Schwartz was instrumental in developing the award and Fellow Thomas Schumacher funded the award for a ten-year period. The awardee is determined by a small committee of two or three who judge a required essay and judge the performances in the Irene Ryan finals. The recipient is given a \$2,500.00 check as part of the awards given after the Irene Ryan finals.

Jane Alexander Award



Chloe Shade is a Charlotte-based director, performer, and arts administrator rooted in community-centered storytelling and arts access. She recently received a Masters of Public Administration with a specialization in Arts Administration from UNC Charlotte. Chloe has collaborated with a range of regional and national organizations, including The Kennedy Center, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, The Black Theatre Repertory Company, Queen City New Play Initiative, Theatre Charlotte, and UNC Charlotte's Department of Theatre. Dedicated to creating spaces where BIPOC artists can thrive, she continues to build a multidisciplinary career that blends artistic practice with arts leadership and community impact.



The Uta Hagen Award was originally given by the Fellows as part of the centenary celebration of the iconic theatre teacher. Fellow Bonnie Nelson Schwartz was instrumental in developing the award in collaboration with HB Studios in New York City and the ACTF. Fellow Karen Berman funded the \$2,500.00 award from the Fellows. The Uta Hagen Award consists of a week-long Uta Hagen teacher lab at HB Studios in New York City, airfare from ACTF, and a \$2,500.00 stipend check from the Fellows for travel and accommodations in New York City. The awardee is selected from female teachers of acting at a ACTF affiliated college or university.

Uta Hagen Award



Be Boyd will be seen in the title role in an upcoming documentary about Mary McLeod Bethune. A member of Actors' Equity, Be has performed for several Shakespeare companies. Her voice-over and commercial credits include KFC, Wycliffe, Disney, Thrifty Car Rental, Belk, Zora's Roots (Zora Neale Hurston documentary), Food Lion, and The Gallery series. A member of the Dramatists Guild, she was commissioned by Orlando Family Theatre to create a script about the Ocoee massacre. As a show director for the Walt Disney Company, she directed theme park shows as well as productions for Disney Event Group and the Disney Institute. Additional professional directing includes productions in New York, Texas, Toronto, Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky, Vermont, and Florida. Be has been a consultant for corporations/companies including Tourism for South Africa, FARO (3D Technology, Engineering, and Computer Simulation), and Mursion (virtual training). She is a member of the ACTF National Executive Committee.



The College of Fellows of the American Theatre, in partnership with the American College Theater Festival (ACTF) and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, is proud to announce the inauguration of The August Wilson Fellowship for Students of Color in Technical Theatre, Production, and Design. The fellowship was created to bolster emerging students of color theatre professionals by providing opportunities at the highest level of immersive training and practice in technical theatre, theatre production, and design in a professional workplace.

August Wilson Fellowship



Camilo "Milo" Ramos is a Bolivian–Cuban theatre artist, stage manager, and actor currently pursuing his studies at Dallas College. With a growing passion for both performance and production, he has contributed to multiple campus productions, developing a reputation for leadership, organization, and a collaborative spirit. His work as a stage manager has strengthened his ability to guide creative teams with clarity and care, while his experience as an actor continues to inform his storytelling from a holistic perspective.

Before discovering theatre, Camilo studied business at Universidad Privada Boliviana, where he was recognized as a top student-athlete and served in leadership roles within his program. He later transitioned to the arts, bringing with him a strong work ethic and team-driven mindset shaped by years as a captain in competitive sports.

Camilo credits his artistic journey to the strong community that supported him from the very beginning—his family, friends, mentors, his wife, and the Dallas College theatre department—whose encouragement and belief in his potential gave him the confidence to pursue this path. He is deeply committed to creating spaces where artists feel supported, focused, and inspired. As a recipient of the 2026 August Wilson Fellowship for Theatre Production and Design, he is honored to continue developing his craft alongside a community of artists dedicated to shaping the future of American theatre.

A Continuing Call to the Field

The August Wilson Fellowship stands as a national investment in the future of American theatre—ensuring that the next generation of designers and technical artists reflects the full breadth, talent, and diversity of the nation's stories.

As August Wilson himself reminded us:

"Our past does not define our future; it is up to us to create our own destiny."

Fellowship Partners



For additional information, media inquiries, or partnership opportunities, please visit:

<https://www.thecollegeoffellows.org/aw-fellowship> or contact AWFellowshipcof@gmail.com

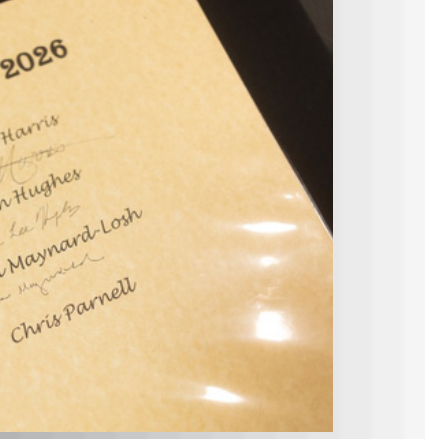
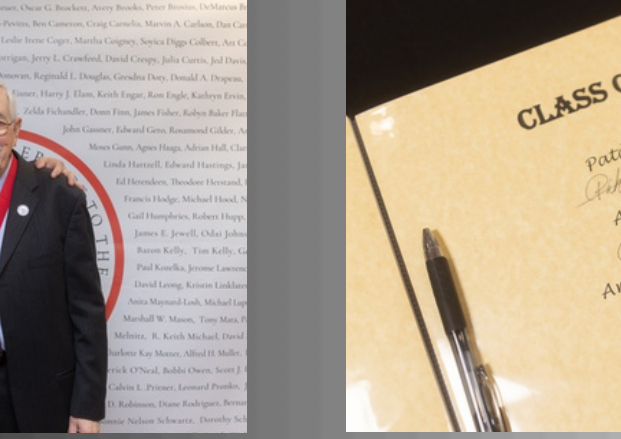
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61st Membership Weekend



2026 Fellows Photo Gallery



Dustin Moon Visuals

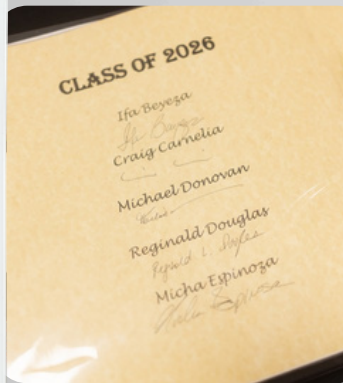
2026 Fellows Photo Gallery



Dustin Moon Visuals

Additional Photos can be found at this link: [61st Memberships Weekend](#)

2026 Fellows Photo Gallery



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