

HEARTLAND PERFORMING ARTS, INC.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Wednesday, January 21, 2026**

## Heartland Performing Arts Announces New Executive Committee and Welcomes Two New Board Members

*Leadership updates reinforce long-term sustainability and lasting impact for the touring performing arts sector*

Heartland Performing Arts, Inc. (HPA) is pleased to announce the election of a new executive committee and the appointment of two new board members, alongside the renewal of three returning board members for new three-year terms spanning 2026–2028. Together, these leadership updates reflect the organization’s continued commitment to sustainable governance, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term service to the touring performing arts field.

### Newly Elected Executive Committee

Heartland Performing Arts announces the following executive committee officers:

#### **Eric Olmscheid**, President

*Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Michigan State University (renewed 3-year term)*

Eric Olmscheid is a passionate advocate for the performing arts and their profound impact on communities. Since June 2022, he has served as the Executive Director of Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Michigan State University. Under his leadership, Wharton Center has expanded its reach through innovative programming, transformative educational initiatives, and dynamic collaborations—engaging more than 200,000 patrons annually. With over 20 years of experience in performing arts management, Eric is recognized as a thought leader in the field. He has received the Broadway League Award for Outstanding Achievement in Education and was named to the Business Record’s “Forty Under 40.” He actively contributes to the national arts landscape through his work with The Broadway League and the Association of Performing Arts Professionals. Additionally, he serves on the boards of Heartland Performing Arts/Midwest Arts Xpo, Choose Lansing CVB, and the MSUFCU Reseda Group. Notably, he is one of only two Tony Awards® voters in Michigan. Before Wharton Center: Des Moines Performing Arts and Ordway Center for Performing Arts. A native Minnesotan, he grew up on a dairy farm before earning a bachelor’s degree in music and a master’s degree in arts management. In his free time, he enjoys traveling with his husband, Adam, and their two doodles, Rue Hammerstein and Beo Sondheim.

#### **Jennifer Ross**, Vice President

*Walton Arts Center*

Jennifer has over thirty years of professional experience as an educator, artist, and arts administrator. She has held numerous positions at Walton Arts Center in her twenty-two-year tenure including managing education and client events and the Patron Services, Production, and Programming teams. Currently, she is responsible for Walton Arts Center’s overall artistic direction and oversees the Programming, Learning & Engagement, and Visual Arts teams. She is a passionate advocate for arts education and the economic benefits of the arts, a willing

mentor to arts colleagues, a long-time member of the Association of Performing Arts Professionals, and a member of The Broadway League. Outside of the arts, Jennifer is involved in the administration of her husband's dental practice, managing the books and human resources. She also serves as a bookkeeper for two local dental organizations. Jennifer enjoys exploring food, wine, and cocktails whether at home or while traveling, and loves to cook for a crowd. She and her husband, Kenton, have one son, Robert, an aerospace engineer, pilot, and Air Force 2nd Lieutenant who'll begin Air Force pilot training in February.

**Sara Barasch, Secretary**

*IMG Artists*

Sara Barasch is currently Senior Vice President & Booking Manager at IMG Artists, where she has been for 20 years. Sara books IMG's attractions, world music, jazz, classical crossover, and dance artists with venues in 14 US states. Previously, she spent three summers working at The Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, NY. She has a degree in Music Education and Vocal Performance from Ithaca College. Sara is passionate about preserving the future of the performing arts industry and is an advocate for arts education and community engagement. Sara is a founding board member for Heartland Performing Arts and is thrilled to be in her second board term. She is honored to be part of the hardworking team that produces the annual Midwest Arts XPO. Sara lives with her husband and 9-year-old son in Queens, NYC.

**Tommy Hensel, Treasurer**

*Elgin Community College*

For over two decades, Tommy Hensel has worked as an arts presenter, bringing the magic of live performance to communities through thoughtful, multi-disciplinary programming. As a presenter, he curates a diverse range of performances spanning styles and genres, introducing audiences to the breadth and richness of the performing arts. Tommy's professional journey began at a nonprofit theater in New Hampshire where he discovered the profound impact of the arts on communities. That formative experience led him to the Midwest, where he served as Managing Director of the Fine & Performing Arts Center at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Illinois. Since February 2021, Tommy has served as Senior Director of Performing Arts at Elgin Community College in Elgin, Illinois, where he continues to expand access to high-quality performing arts experiences for students and the surrounding community. In recognition of his leadership and contributions to the field, Tommy was honored with the 2023 Excellence in Presenting the Performing Arts Award from the North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents (NAPAMA). This leadership team brings deep experience across presenting, booking, and nonprofit administration, positioning HPA to steward its mission with intention, stability, and care. Their continued service provides continuity and institutional knowledge as Heartland Performing Arts deepens its impact and plans responsibly for the future.

## **New Board Members (First Term, 2026–2028)**

HPA is proud to welcome two new members to its Board of Directors:

**Tara Bailey, Bailiwick Booking Agency (*Agent/Manager*)**

Tara Bailey is the Founder and Director of Bailiwick Booking Agency & Arts Management, which she launched in 2018. Previously, Tara served as Associate Director at Kids' Entertainment and as Booking & Touring Program Manager at ArtStarts in Schools, where she produced large-scale conferences and coordinated more than 2,000 annual school performances across British Columbia. Her industry leadership includes roles with New Forms Media Society, the Vancouver International Jazz Festival, and producing the APAP Family Showcase. She has previously

served on the Boards of NAPAMA and Arts Northwest, and she contributed to the Midwest Arts XPO as lead on the Youth & Family Showcase and Showcase Committee member.

**Lindsay Bauer**, Fairfield Arts & Convention Center (*Presenter*)

Lindsay Bauer has built a career advancing the arts across the Midwest, leading organizations that connect communities through creativity and culture. She is the Executive Director of the Fairfield Arts & Convention Center, where she oversees dynamic programming, operations, and community engagement. Bauer currently serves as President of the Iowa Cultural Coalition and is the Immediate Past President of the Iowa Presenters Network, extending her impact statewide through advocacy, professional development, and sector leadership. With a collaborative leadership style and a passion for building resilient arts ecosystems, she continues to shape the future of the cultural sector in the region. Their appointments further strengthen the board's balanced representation of presenters and agents and support the organization's focus on building durable, values-driven partnerships across the field.

## 2026 Heartland Performing Arts Board of Directors

- **Bill Blagg**, *Bill Blagg Magic & Illusion*
- **Gail Boyd**, *Gail Boyd Artist Management*
- **Tianna Conway**, *Moraine Valley Community College* (renewed three-year term)
- **Shantel Dow**, *Sheldon Theatre of Performing Arts*
- **Jared Duymovic**, *Cadenza Artists International*
- **Tommy Hensel**, *Elgin Community College*
- **Kevin Horton**, *William Morris Endeavor* (renewed three-year term)
- **Kerith Iverson**, *Québec Government Office in Chicago*
- **Sarah McCarthy**, *Dandelion Artists*
- **Gary Minyard**, *Dayton Live*
- **Lisa Rock**, *Close to You / Lisa Rock Entertainment*

## Stewarding a Strong Foundation

Founded in 2022, Heartland Performing Arts is a nonprofit organization created by agents, artists, presenters, and consortia leaders to address the evolving needs of the touring performing arts sector. The organization fosters innovation, professional development, and advocacy throughout the central United States, with an emphasis on practices that are sustainable for artists, organizations, and communities alike.

HPA is best known as the producer of Midwest Arts XPO (MAX), an annual performing arts conference that convenes industry professionals to strengthen artist touring relationships, share best practices, and support a healthy, interconnected performing arts ecosystem.

“As Heartland Performing Arts continues to evolve, our focus is on sustainability and meaningful, lasting impact,” said Eric Olmscheid, President of Heartland Performing Arts. “This executive committee and board reflect a shared commitment to stewardship—ensuring that Midwest Arts XPO and HPA remain responsive, resilient, and valuable to the field for years to come.”

## Looking Ahead

With renewed leadership in place, Heartland Performing Arts remains focused on long-term impact: strengthening touring pathways, supporting artists and presenters through changing

conditions, and creating opportunities for connection and learning that endure beyond any single conference or season.

### About Heartland Performing Arts

Heartland Performing Arts is a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering innovation, creating educational opportunities, strengthening artist touring relationships, and supporting arts advocacy throughout the central United States. The organization was founded by agents, artists, and state and regional consortia leaders from across the Midwest and beyond. Learn more at [midwestartsexpo.org](http://midwestartsexpo.org)