

Understanding the Ecosystem: Why Every Corner of Arts Management Counts

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026 | 9:00-10:15 a.m.

Understanding the Ecosystem: Why Every Corner of Arts Management Counts is a dynamic professional development session that brings the student Collegiate Arts Bridge experience full circle. Open to all conference attendees, this session highlights the interconnected nature of arts management, from presenting and touring to audience engagement, funding, and community impact, offering a comprehensive view of how every role contributes to a thriving arts ecosystem.

Grounded in the immersive Collegiate Arts Bridge summer program, which pairs students with real world mentorship, professional development, and hands on engagement throughout the conference, this session reflects on key takeaways and connects the dots between theory and practice. Emerging professionals and seasoned practitioners alike will gain insight into how collaboration across disciplines strengthens the field and why every corner of arts management truly counts.

Moderators

Laurel Canan has 26 years of experience in the arts industry, with a background in programming, marketing, strategic planning, fundraising and nationwide arts advocacy. She has worked as an artist manager, booking agent, and the executive director of a start-up performing arts center. Laurel's leadership has been widely recognized, including Forward Janesville's *Woman of Excellence* award, commendation from the Wisconsin State Assembly, and induction into the Rock County Arts Hall of Fame. A frequent speaker and mentor at national conferences, Laurel has also lectured on Arts Administration and Development, teaching in multiple university programs. Laurel served on the first board of Heartland Performing Arts., Inc. She is the former president of NAPAMA, the Ohio Arts Professionals Network and co-chaired the 2016 Arts Midwest Conference. She holds an MPA from Ball State University.

Tianna Conway is the Managing Director of the Fine and Performing Arts Center at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, IL. With 22 years of experience, she has also held roles as the Director of Arts Events and Audience Engagement at Carthage College where she founded the Office of Performing and Visual Arts and developed 35 student positions supporting programming, presenting, front-of-house, marketing, grant writing, outreach, and event production; Director of Education at the Schauer Arts Center; Box Office Manager at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee; and Assistant Director for the Office of Performing and Visual Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Platteville. Tianna holds a B.S. in Music Performance and an M.S.E. in Arts Management from the University of Wisconsin–Platteville. She served as Chair of the Wisconsin Presenters Network (2021- 2025) and is a founder and former Board Secretary and Vice President of Heartland Performing Arts, Inc., which launched the Midwest Arts XPO in 2023.

Panelist

Hannah Cummins (Graduate Student) is a performing arts specialist currently working at Moraine Valley Fine and Performing Arts Center as the Performing Arts and Events Coordinator where she manages the Box Office, Front of House staff, and heads all hospitality related needs. She received her undergraduate degree at Drake University in both Musical Theater and Public Relations. Following graduation, she dove right into event management and found herself led back to her true passion – performing arts coordination. She is currently attending Roosevelt University in Chicago, IL to receive her graduate degree in Performing Arts Administration. She plans to continue working, educating, and growing in the fine arts field to help strengthen the arts as a whole, not just for her community but globally.

John Hassig (Presenter) is the Executive Director of the Schauer Arts Center, bringing over 25 years of leadership in arts administration, programming, and fiscal management to the organization. Previously, as Director of Programming & Education at the Marcus Performing Arts Center, John curated multiple diverse series including jazz and dance, while spearheading educational strategies and community engagement efforts. Throughout his career, John has developed a proven track record of growing programs and optimizing operational resources, having curated thousands of performances. His leadership background includes serving as Director of the Center for the Arts at UW-Platteville, Executive Director of the Heartland Festival and Artistic Director of the Galena Festival of the Performing Arts. In addition to his administrative work, John has served as an adjunct faculty at UW-Whitewater. He holds a Master of Arts in Community Arts Management with his undergraduate work in Theater Arts. John remains deeply involved in the arts community through service that has included the Wisconsin Presenters Network and on the various panels for the Wisconsin Arts Board, Black Arts MKE, Arts Midwest and MAX.

Clay Johnson (Artist) raised in a family of preachers, teachers and Folk/Southern Gospel singers, was born to inspire and entertain. His passion for music performance has developed since childhood over thousands of concerts, musicals and shows on stages from L.A. to NYC, whether playing trombone at nearby elementary schools, crooning for assisted living facilities, or singing at festivals, arenas, or sold-out theaters.

Jennifer Morris (Artist Manager) joined Siegel Artist Management in 1998, became a partner in 2002, and assumed ownership in 2016. Together with her dedicated team, she looks forward to celebrating the company's 55th Anniversary in the 2026–27 season, continuing the professional integrity and legacy of founder Ethel Siegel. Jennifer served on the Midwest Arts XPO (MAX) planning committee and held board positions with Pennsylvania Presenters and the North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents (NAPAMA). For more than 25 years, she has contributed to professional development initiatives and produced artist showcases nationwide. She founded the Agents & Managers Retreat—now a NAPAMA event—and received the NAPAMA Award for Excellence in 2014. She is also a member of the Dance Managers Collective, which produces the annual APAP Dance Showcase at New York City Center and the Ailey Citigroup Theater.