



## NEWS AND INFORMATION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12/14/2009

### **Emerging Arts Leaders Elected to National Council**

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Americans for the Arts, the nation’s leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, announced today the election of seven new members to its Emerging Leader Council, an elected advisory body that assists with developing programs and resources for emerging arts professionals nationwide. The Emerging Leader Council represents the Emerging Leaders Network, a group of 29 local networks across the U.S. that provide professional development and networking opportunities to young arts professionals in their area.

The new council members are: Michelle Grove, Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, MD; Letitia Ivins, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, CA; Charles Jensen, The Writer’s Center, Bethesda, MD; Gabriela Jirasek, Chicago Humanities Festival, IL; Ian David Moss, Createquity.com, Providence, RI; Scarlett Swerdlow, Arts Alliance Illinois, IL; and Bettina Swigger, Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region, CO.

“The Emerging Leader Council serves an important role in helping Americans for the Arts carry out one of its primary goals of strengthening an informed leadership. These seven new council members have each excelled at leadership within their own communities, and we are thrilled to welcome these bright and accomplished individuals to the national council,” said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts.

Now in its 10th year, the Emerging Leaders program encourages new arts leaders to participate fully in the nonprofit arts field. Council members are committed to enhancing that leadership capacity in them and throughout the national network of emerging leaders at Americans for the Arts. New professionals are valuable to the arts community, and the 19 members of the Emerging Leader Council are dedicated to see that the support for the arts continues for generations to come.

Following is a list of the newly elected Emerging Leader Council members:

**Michelle Grove**

**Events and Grants Manager, Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County  
Silver Spring, MD**

Michelle Grove is the grants manager at the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, MD. Michelle works with the Grants Director to manage the Council's extensive grants program, which annually administers approximately \$4.5 million to nearly 150 arts and humanities organizations, artists, and scholars in the county. Michelle is a member of the steering committee of the FORUM for Emerging Arts Professionals, Washington DC's emerging leaders network, and the founder of the annual Emerging Arts Leaders Symposium hosted by American University. She has also served on panels for the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities and as a guest lecturer at American University. Previously, Michelle worked as a private violin instructor and musicians contractor. Michelle holds a B.A. in violin performance from the University of Maryland and a M.A. in arts management from American University. Her master's thesis focused on leadership development for arts professionals.

**Letitia Ivins**

**Civic Art Coordinator, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, Civic Art Program  
Los Angeles, CA**

Letitia Fernandez Ivins is currently the civic art coordinator for the Los Angeles County Arts Commission's Civic Art Program. As the civic art coordinator, she collaborates with artists, government administrators, capital project managers, and community members to produce high-quality, lasting, and innovative artwork for public spaces. Prior to her current position, she was the Development and Operations Specialist for Ryman Arts, a nonprofit arts education organization serving high school teens with high-caliber studio art courses paired with college and career counseling. Letitia is also an advisor to Outpost for Contemporary Art, a co-chair of the Public Art Coalition of Southern California, a fundraising committee member for the Pilipino Workers' Center and Public Matters, a member of the Emerging Arts Leaders Los Angeles network, and a new mom.

**Charles Jensen**

**Director, The Writer's Center  
Bethesda, MD**

Charles Jensen is the director of The Writer's Center, one of the largest and most successful literary centers in the United States. He is the author of four poetry collections, including *The First Risk* (Lethe Press, 2009) and holds an M.F.A. in poetry from Arizona State University. His work has been recognized with a grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts and has

appeared in *New England Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. Charles has worked in arts administration for six years, including time in Phoenix at the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing, where he created four of the organization's major programs. He serves on the Maryland Citizens for the Arts Emerging Advocate Steering Committee and volunteered with the Arizona Commission on the Arts' Emerging Leader group during the group's creation. He serves on the board of directors of the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County.

### **Gabriela Jirasek**

#### **Marketing and New Media Associate, Chicago Humanities Festival**

##### **Chicago, IL**

Gabriela Jirasek, marketing and new media associate at the Chicago Humanities Festival, promotes the annual November Humanities Festival, the children's festival (Stages, Sights & Sounds) every May, and year-round programming for Chicago-area teachers. Gabriela serves as art director of [www.chicagohumanities.org](http://www.chicagohumanities.org), an online humanities journal. She also manages the Festival's online communities via Facebook and Twitter and moderates Pluck, the Festival's website community. Gabriela has worked with the CHF Community Outreach Liaison and is a member of the Audience Development and Diversity Committee. She graduated from Tufts University majoring in international relations and Spanish, with a minor in communications and media studies. She also studied at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. At Tufts University she was a founding member of Bare Bodkin Theatre Company, a group dedicated to producing original student written works and alternative theater in non-traditional venues.

### **Ian David Moss**

#### **Blogger, Createquity.com**

##### **Providence, RI**

Ian David Moss founded Createquity.com, a widely-read arts policy blog, as a first-year student in the M.B.A. program at the Yale School of Management. Last summer, he developed the strategic plan for a Bay Area cultural asset map and co-created the first-ever logic model for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's Performing Arts Program. Now a Rhode Island-based consultant, he works with clients on projects including strategic planning, program development, program evaluation, and data analysis. Previously, he was Development Manager for the American Music Center and founded two first-of-their-kind performing ensembles in New York City: a hybrid electric chamber group/experimental rock band (Capital M), and a choral collective dedicated to the music of living composers (C4). He was recently named one of two "younger leaders very likely to grow into major contributors to the arts in this country" in Barry Hennessey's annual ranking of the top 25 leaders in the nonprofit arts sector.

**Scarlett Swerdlow****Advocacy and Communications Director, Arts Alliance Illinois****Chicago, IL**

Scarlett Swerdlow directs advocacy and communications at Arts Alliance Illinois, the state's leading voice for the arts and arts education. She works to inform and mobilize Arts Alliance stakeholders and increase the Alliance's public profile through grassroots activism, media relations, and social media strategy. Prior to starting at the Arts Alliance in 2008, Scarlett served as executive director of Students for Sensible Drug Policy, one of the largest student-based advocacy organizations in the country. She has also worked as a consultant, helping nonprofits reach students and youth through innovative issue campaigns. Scarlett earned a B.A. in history and graduated with honors from the University of California at Berkeley. Scarlett is an active member of the Chicago Emerging Leader Network, which she helped re-launch in 2008.

**Bettina Swigger****Executive Director, Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region****Colorado Springs, CO**

Bettina Swigger is currently the Executive Director of COPPeR, the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region, a local arts agency serving El Paso and Teller counties in Colorado. She works with arts organizations, artists, businesses and municipal governments to ensure that arts and creativity are strategically positioned in all areas of the community. She is a fierce champion of community arts development and is an active member of several local strategic initiatives, including a cultural planning process. She has keen interest in collaborations, grassroots organizing, interdisciplinary arts partnerships, pilot community ventures, and new media and technology. Prior to her work at COPPeR, she managed a multidisciplinary arts festival at Colorado College. She is an avid reader and plays the viola.

***Americans for the Arts** is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, it has a record of more than 50 years of service. Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Additional information is available at [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org).*

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