

# VIRTUAL SEA SUMMIT:

*Graduating with an Arts Degree* Now What?  
during a Pandemic

## List of Presenters:

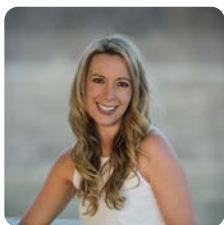
tentative as of 3/20/21



**Nicole Anderson** is a career coach driven by her passion for helping people uplevel their careers. With a decade of experience in college admissions, career services, and early careers recruiting, her experience draws from a variety of spaces to enable equitable opportunity in education and careers. She previously managed the career services office for the College of Fine Arts at UT Austin and currently recruits interns for a Fortune 50 company. Nicole is also an abstract painter, an Artist INC Fellow, and holds a B.F.A. in Studio Art from UNC Charlotte.



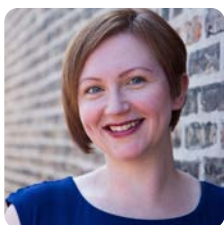
**Daniel Arthur** is a former College Teacher, Art Director, and Media Consultant. He is an Author of 8 books about his life in the Arts of Business and Education, and now a full-time Cartoonist and part-time Computer Musician, starting his own Business.



**Emily Assell** is an international and best selling children's book author and speaker. In 2016, Emily and her husband founded Generation Claimed to self-publish her first book, *You Are*. 3 months after being released, her book was picked up by Tyndale House Publishers, and she signed a book deal for 2 additional books. These books went on to be bestsellers in children's book categories and are currently being translated internationally. Emily has spoken at many parenting conferences, schools, mother's groups, and special events, and has been a featured guest on multiple podcasts. But don't worry, her 3 crazy kids aren't that impressed, and continually losing to them at Mario Kart keeps her pretty humble.



As an Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Nonprofit Management, **Dr. Barrett Baebler** shares his expertise teaching entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, finance, leadership, earned revenue development, and nonprofit strategy courses at both the undergrad and graduate levels at Webster University in St. Louis, Mo. Dr. Baebler serves as a consultant, advisor, and mentor to both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations focusing on capacity-building, financial management, operations, strategic planning, and business plan development. Dr. Baebler is the founder and president of the consulting firm, CFO Options, LLC.



Mezzo-Soprano **Jennifer L. Barrett** is proud to be a part of the Chicago music community, using her versatile, flexible instrument in a variety of settings. Highlights of the 2019-20 season include the United States debut of John Plant's *I will fly like a bird*, with Thompson Street Opera. Jennifer holds a BA in Vocal Music Education from North Central College, and a MA in Vocal Pedagogy from Northeastern Illinois University. When not on stage, she is a professor of Applied Classical and Musical Theater Voice at North Central College. She serves as the Soprano/Alto section leader at First United Methodist Church of LaGrange, and a vocal health consultant through Chicago and the suburbs.



**Michael Baxter** enjoys an exciting and wide-ranging professional career as a choreographer, performer and educator working in theatres and universities across the country. His Muni career began in 2008, when he was hired as a performer. Between 2012 and 2018, he served as Resident Choreographer, during which time he collaborated with top artistic teams on a multitude of productions and supervised the creative expansion of the esteemed Muni Teen program. Over the last eight years, he has become a regular fixture at The Muni and his unique skills have expanded to include directing and producing. Appointed in 2018, he now serves as the Artistic Associate. Michael balances his work at the Muni with an exciting and wide-ranging professional career as a performer and choreographer in National Tours, Off-Broadway and at acclaimed regional theatres across the country. Michael is a graduate of The Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University where he received his BFA with Honors in Musical Theatre. Michael is a member of Actors' Equity Association (AEA) and an associate member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SDC).

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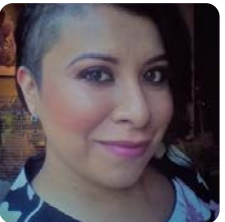
**Dr. Gary D. Beckman** is Director of Entrepreneurial Studies in the Arts where he developed and administers the nation's first and largest campus-wide Arts Entrepreneurship Minor. Before arriving at NC State, he developed the nation's first Music Entrepreneurship Minor at the University of South Carolina's School of Music. In addition to recently being honored with the naming of the Society for Arts Entrepreneurship Education's research impact award, he also co-founded and co-edited the world's first academic journal on arts entrepreneurship education, edited the field's first essay collection, "Disciplining the Arts: Teaching Entrepreneurship in Context" and co-founded the Society for Arts Entrepreneurship Education ([societyaae.org](http://societyaae.org)).



**Joe Bianco** is one of Chicago's premier voiceover talents and an equity actor. He has recently performed with Drury Lane, The House, Chicago Shakespeare, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Door Shakespeare & Shakespeare Project Chicago. Some recent voiceover clients include McDonalds, Bungie, West Suburban Bank, YMCA, Mercedes, The Onion, Lurie Children's Hospital, and the video game "Streets of Rage 4" available on all platforms. On camera credits include The Chi, Chicago Fire and work with Clickhole & The Onion Labs.



**Tyler Lenn Bradley** is a creative entrepreneur whose life mission is help people understand the connections between all humans and help others know that they are not alone in any experience they face. Currently she works at Walt Disney Imagineering where she is a part of the team that imagines and designs the Disney theme parks, resorts, and cruise lines worldwide. She is also the founder and Artistic Director of HUE Productions, which exists to tell authentic stories through live performance and media to inspire audiences to embrace the connections between all Humanity. A native of Lansing, MI, Bradley attended Columbia College Chicago for her Business Entrepreneurship Masters of Arts Management and Central Michigan University for her undergraduate degree. In the past, Bradley has worked for several organizations including: The American Dance Festival, Deeply Rooted Productions and Zoe Life Spa & Salon.



**Alex Velazquez Brightbill** is a Mexican artist who immigrated to Chicago at the age of ten. She earned a BFA from Northeastern Illinois University and has shown at numerous galleries and curated art shows and cultural events. Her artwork embodies the hybridity of growing up with two cultural experiences, social justice and her love for animals. Alex is also a former SEA student attendee and helped judge the pitch competition at the 2020 SEA Annual Conference.



**Patoya Marie Cobbs** is the founder and CEO of Love Happy LLC, stationed in the greeting card industry, she creates products with words of sentiments and expressions for the LGBTQ community. Patoya (pronouns are she/her/hers) is a feminine lesbian who was born and raised in San Diego, CA- she recently relocated to Orland Park, IL. Patoya, received her Bachelor of Arts in journalism with a specialization in advertising and marketing at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She is currently working towards her Masters in Entrepreneurship at Columbia College Chicago. Patoya spent able time working and perfecting her skills as a greeting card artist and an independent business owner. She is acting writer, creative director, visionary, and overseer of the company.

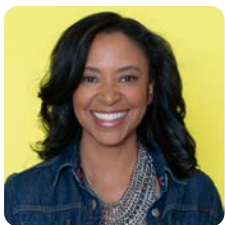


**Margi Cole** founder and Artistic Director of The Dance COLEctive, received a BA in dance from Columbia College Chicago and an MFA in dance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has taught for several educational and professional organizations nationally and internationally and performed with many well-known choreographers and companies. Margi has received two Illinois Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowships. She has served as a Chicago Dancemakers Forum Consortium Member, on grant panels, in public forums and is on the board of See Chicago Dance. Cole is on faculty at Columbia College Chicago, where she has served as a Lecturer and Associate Chair and is currently the Program Manager of the Dance Center Presenting Series.

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**Laura Daniels** is the Assistant Director of Internships and Career Advising in the Career Center at Columbia College Chicago. In her role, Laura manages the centralized internship program for the college. This includes supervising a team of six Internship and Career Advisors, advising cinema and television students and developing career programming and initiatives. Previously, she was the External Relations Coordinator for the Interactive Arts and Media Department at Columbia, where she increased industry relations and student participation in conferences such as the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco and SXSW in Austin. Prior to coming to Columbia, Laura held a variety of positions in the television industry, including working for NBC Universal as an NBC Page, for A&E as a coordinator in development, and as an Associate Producer for the unscripted series, My Strange Addiction.



**Saudia Davis** loves to connect the dots in business and socially with meaningful introductions in order to develop mutually beneficial outcomes. After 10 years of providing youth empowerment through SPAL, she brings her expertise and wisdom to the Center for Creative Entrepreneurship. Saudia spent the past 3 years actively fulfilling the creative consultancy of a request from the Smarty Pants Are Leaders partner school, Catalyst Circle Rock, to lead and create the VISION for the Kehrein Center for the Arts. (<https://www.kehreincenter.com>) She can proudly share that the successful team effort to rebuild the 1000 seat theatre renovation in Chicago's West Side Austin neighborhood, opened to the public in May 2019. After sitting for 45 years vacant, it now hosts concerts, the City of Chicago launch of INVEST - SOUTH/WEST, public performances, film screenings and graduated the first Catalyst Circle Rock scholars in June. Saudia is passionate, curious, a doer, resourceful and a powerful connector!



**Amanda Eich** started out as an architectural designer in corporate interiors, took a detour into entrepreneurship with a graphic design + stationery company, and moved back into the corporate arena designing graphics, logos, and marketing collateral for small businesses. It seemed inevitable that the premier architectural and environmental graphics printer in Chicago, Cushing & Co., would be a professional love connection. Amanda has a particular knack for finding the story in-between the lines of a brand and bringing that to life through design. Amanda's dream gig is to design a purse that actually works and to someday design and own her own designer-focused coffeeshop (it may or may not be called "Caffeination Station").



**Hale Ekinci** (b. 1984 in Karamursel, Turkey) is a multidisciplinary Turkish artist, designer, and educator based in Chicago. She received her MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts & Media at Columbia College Chicago and is currently an Associate Professor of Art & Design at North Central College. Focusing on personal history, cultural identity, gender politics, and craft traditions, her works vary from videos to embroidery paintings embellished with vibrant colors, patterns, and autobiographical relics. She was recently a Facebook Chicago Artist in Resident. Her work has been exhibited nationally at EXPO Chicago, One After 909, Woman Made Gallery, South Bend Museum of Art, Koehnline Museum of Art, St. Louis Artists' Guild, and Queens College Art Center. Her videos have screened internationally including New York City, Berlin, Warsaw, and Jerusalem. She has completed residencies at ACRE, Jivar Barcelona, Momentum Worldwide Berlin, Elsewhere Museum, and Chicago Artist Coalition.



**Eric Elliott** is an artist art educator living in Grand Junction, Colorado. He received his MFA in Painting and Drawing from the University of Washington, his BA in Art Practice from the University of California Berkeley, and completed a yearlong Kickstarter funded art residency in Jerusalem Israel in 2014. He was the 2009 winner of the Behnke Foundation's Neddy Artist Fellowship and received the Seattle Art Museums 2008 Kayla Skinner Special Recognition Award. Elliott is currently the Associate Professor of Painting at Colorado Mesa University.

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**Rebecca A. Ferrell** (she/her) is a dance advocate, artist, educator, producer, and programmer. She holds a BFA in Dance and Choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University as well as an MFA in Dance from Arizona State University. As a longtime activist for the arts, Rebecca has served as the Director of the VA Dance Symposium, Co-Producer of the Richmond Dance Festival, dance critic for GayRVA and RVA Magazine, ACDA Central Region Conference Coordinator, Director of Public Relations and Engagement for the University of Illinois' Department of Dance, Director and Curator of the Flatlands Dance Film Festival, and Executive Director of Dance Metro DC. She is a current board member for Virginians for the Arts, the state's arts advocacy organization. She currently sits on the Arts Education Partnership Application Review Committee as well as the Blacklight Summit Advisory Committee. Rebecca is currently the Director of Programs at Dance/USA, a faculty member at Shenandoah Conservatory, and an Arts Administration PhD candidate at the University of Kentucky.



**Chelsea Noelle Fetherlin** is a Pittsburgh-native, feminist, and mixed media artist whose work is centered on women's health. Her works include books, zines, photography, ceramics, sculpture, drawing, painting, printmaking, assemblage and other combinations of traditional and experimental techniques. Focusing on her experience as a woman living with chronic illness and brain injury, she educates and empowers others to take charge of their own health by embracing, researching, understanding, and normalizing talking about their lived experiences.



**Shawna Flanigan** oversees education programming at Center of Creative Arts (COCA) as the Director of Arts Education and New Program Development. In this position she develops new programs and initiatives, oversees summer camp, culinary and art and design programs, manages the education budgets, hires and manages faculty, and curates COCA's Millstone Gallery. Shawna has presented at four national arts education conferences on behalf of COCA. She led two major initiatives including the initial committee work that resulted in Interchange and the development of COCA's COCAbiz program. Shawna, who has an extensive background in arts education, joined COCA in 2001 from her previous position as the Children's Theatre Director at Theatre of Western Springs and as an adjunct faculty member at both DePaul University and Barat College. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at East Central College. Shawna holds a BA in Theatre Studies from Knox College and an MFA in Directing from DePaul University.



**Sergio Gomez** is a Chicago based visual artist, curator and creative entrepreneur. His artwork has been subject of over 45 solo exhibitions and has participated in over 150 group exhibitions in the US and abroad. In 2018, his work received 4 solo museum shows in Romania, Mexico, and Italy. His work can be found in numerous private and public collections. Sergio is the founder of 33 Contemporary Gallery, faculty at South Suburban College, curator at the Zhou B. Art Center and co-funder of the Art NXT Level coaching program. His weekly Art NXT Level podcast and Breakfast with Sergio video show inspires and educates artists around the world. Web: [www.sergiogomezonline.com](http://www.sergiogomezonline.com) Instagram: @sergiogomezprojects



**KaMariea (Kay) Gravesande** is on a mission to empower students and professionals in their careers. As a first generation college grad, she learned how to navigate the business world, expanding her network while becoming a successful speaker. She uses her HR industry expertise to guide her clients through the labyrinth of career mapping and business etiquette, while teaching them how to achieve long term goals. With over a decade of experience in Corporate America, Kay shares her real life experience through interactive learning workshops to connect with her audience. In her free time, you can find her gaming with her husband, or on the baseball field cheering on her two little sluggers.

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**Dawn Gray** is president of Gray Talent Group, founded in 2008, with offices in Chicago and Los Angeles. The mission of Gray Talent Group is to develop actors and take them to the next level of their career. There are currently Gray Talent Actors on Broadway, in movie theaters and in film festivals across America. Gray was named the SAG agent of the month and was the second agent outside of Los Angeles and first in Chicago to receive the award. Before becoming an agent, Gray produced the film *Stray Dogs*. Her other entrepreneurial venture was MOMents, a resource for working mothers. As part of MOMents, Gray produced a radio segment for WMAQ radio, wrote a column for the Chicago Tribune, created a monthly newsletter, ran support groups and gave talks on balancing work and family. A graduate of Northwestern University, her first job out of college was working in the media as a writer/producer for WCFL Radio, UPI and CNN. Later she transitioned into public relations and held management positions at major agencies



**Dionna Griffin-Irons** is a writer, comedy producer, and the longtime former Director of Talent Diversity and Inclusion for The Second City U.S. and Canada. For two decades, she expanded Second City's talent recruitment efforts and mentored hundreds of performing artists to increase underrepresented voices including BIPOC, LGBTQ+ in sketch comedy and on the resident stages. Griffin-Irons has facilitated 200+ workshops to corporations and organizations including Embassy Norway and Latvia, using improvisation as a creative tool for innovation and belonging. Her work has been featured on ABC, NBC, American Theatre Magazine, Diversity Journal, and with University of Chicago's TEDx, The Incredible Unknown. Griffin-Irons teaches at DePaul University in the Computer Digital Media program, Story Studio Chicago, & Chicago Dramatists, and The Harold Ramis Film School. Her signature class "Telling Your Truth" is offered yearlong for professionals and creatives throughout the year who are seeking to tell their greatest story. [dionnagriffinirons.com](http://dionnagriffinirons.com) @dionnagriffinirons



**Annie Hackett** is a passionate speaker who shares her entrepreneurial journey from dancer to educator to business owner with other small business professionals. She is a certified coach for "More Than Just Great Dancing," a licensed dance studio affiliation program that impacts over 75,000 dance students around the globe each week. Her dance and music school, the Kenosha Academy of Performing Arts, founded in 2006, has been featured in Dance Magazine and Dance Teacher Magazine. The school's growth to over 700 students, thriving through economic ups and downs alike, is a testament to Annie's entrepreneurial savviness. She is the founder of the dance program at Carthage College (Kenosha WI) and has been a frequent guest teacher at Columbia College and Roosevelt University (Chicago, IL). Annie has performed and choreographed internationally. Her choreography has been seen at professional theaters across the US. Onstage she has performed in productions at theaters across the United States, Europe, and on cruise ships, and she is a member of the Actor's Equity Association. Annie's mission is to create awareness that there are viable career options in the arts.



**Brianna Hairlson** is an inspirational motivator, joy giver, and faith activator helping to inspire people to fully pursue God's purpose for their lives. Working as a consultant for a large technology firm for 5 years, she became a full time entrepreneur when her job laid her off at 3 months pregnant. She is the creator of Bri's Bump N' Dance class, a nationally recognized dance class for expecting moms, also creating the 2018 Bump N' Dance Tour, a 7 city tour across the United States hosting dance classes while 6 months pregnant. As an author, speaker, and entrepreneur, she loves helping women launch their businesses and love their lives, resulting in joyful profits. Her first book, *Dance Through the Storms: 22 Faith-Filled Reflections to Maintain Your Joy* gives insight into her personal story of triumph during life's most difficult situations.. As the owner of Bri's Dance Place, a dance studio located in Merrillville, Indiana, she provides classes for all ages, stages, and abilities while focusing on age appropriate choreography, music, and costuming. Their motto is "We just don't teach dance, we teach life!" She's been featured on Let's Make a Deal and Windy City Live for her pregnancy and new mom dance class and her business has been awarded over \$50,000 in grants and fellowships from the 100 for 100 Program through American Express and IFundWomen, Caress, Sara Blakely, Spanx, and Global Giving, BeyGood- Beyonce's Foundation and the NAACP, Luminary and Unilever Fellowship, Facebook, and the Comcast Rise Program.

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**Linnette Harrigan** is founder/CEO and a music supervisor for her own agency, Linnette Harrigan Media Inc. Based in New York City, the agency is a specialist in music industry and helps to train, promote and represent emerging music artists, songwriters and musicians from all over the world. The agency has also provided marketing and placement of original and licensed music for television, film, video games, and advertisements for the past 9 years. Linnette Harrigan is also a speaker. Most recent appearances include Canadian Music Conferences (CMW). Linnette is also Winner of the 2020 Media Innovator Awards for Music Business (USA).



**Zach Hartley** is Blueprint Projects' founder and guiding hand. As a veteran agent, top-class executive negotiator, and personable relationship builder, he specializes in getting clients where they need to be. His past wards have included stars such as Grand Funk Railroad, JOHNNYSWIM, Old Dominion, Shenandoah, Steve Miller Band, and Walker County, whilst Zach's work in the sporting community has led to partnerships with the Tennessee Titans, IndyCar, and Minor League Baseball. Further to that, his reputation as a deal maker has seen him broker lucrative contracts between artists and the likes of Macy's, HGTV, AMC, Samsung, T-Mobile, and more.



Born in Little Rock, AR – **Lindsey Hastings** started out as a musician playing in local venues throughout high school. It was at Verizon Arena as a summer intern when she got “the bug” and never turned back. At 19 years old she and a committee of college students pitched the idea of a music festival for the students at the University of Arkansas. That spring the festival sold out and still continues today. During her high school and college years she aspired to give back to her communities through music. She was stage manager at the local festival, Riverfest, in Little Rock. She also helped start FayFest, a concert and 5k, in Fayetteville, AR to raise funds for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. After graduating with a degree in economics and finance, Hastings came home to Paradigm where she had interned the summer before her senior year. She has worked in many facets of the company – beginning in ticket counts and growing into a utility player in the Nashville office. Like so many others, Hastings had to pivot out of touring due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is now working with Marcie Allen's Anzie Blue as well as Pozmantier Entertainment Consulting.



**Melissa Hennessy** is no stranger to helping artists market themselves. After obtaining her BFA from RIT, she continued her education as an assistant in NYC before shooting professionally as a commercial food and product photographer. Realizing her love for business and marketing, she later turned to Artist Management. Putting into practice her creative and business skills, she represented a roster of nationally recognized & award-winning photographers which included among them Walt Denson, Chris Crisman, Jason Lindsey, Andrew Reilly, and Ben Fink. Melissa has worked with agencies, design firms, magazines, and corporations across the country, marketing artists' work, estimating and negotiating their projects, and orchestrating the productions. Melissa now works with students and alumni in a variety of visual disciplines at Columbia College Chicago, and as a freelance consultant to artists wishing to advance their brand and business growth. She enjoys helping artists elevate the way their work is perceived in a manner that is authentic to their artistic vision and reflective of their desired career outcomes.



**Maurice Hissink** specializes in online music promotion using YouTube and Soundcloud. Aside from those services, he helps musicians with branding and consulting.

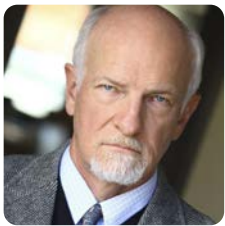
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**Dr. Anne Hoag** is associate professor of communications and Director of the Center for Penn State Student Entrepreneurship (CPSSE) and the Intercollege Minor in Entrepreneurship and Innovation (ENTI). She teaches and conducts research in the areas of media entrepreneurship and economics, telecommunications management and entrepreneurship pedagogy and assessment. Her scholarship has appeared in International Journal on Media Management, Journal of Media Economics, Organization Science, Journalism and Mass Communications Educator, International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management and Telematics and Informatics. Before coming to academia, Hoag was a cable television entrepreneur and manager. She earned a Ph.D. from Michigan State and a B.A. at University of Michigan.



**Amen Jafri** spent 10 years in communications and HR in the federal public service, before pivoting into film and television, most recently working at CPAC, APTN and Alibi Entertainment. Earlier this year she was also a mentor and coordinator for the DOC Institute's inaugural Short Film Lab. Her first film, *The City That Fun Forgot?*, was made without any priorexperience and it had a sold-out premiere in 2014, garnering local and national media coverage. Since then, her other works have been shortlisted for the TVO Short Doc Contest and screened for CBC, TVO, the American Documentary Film Festival and more. She is the creator of the seven-time nominated web series, *The Secret Lives of Public Servants*, and the director of *Creatorland*, a Wingd/Bell Media series on entrepreneurship. In 2018 she won for Best Directing in Non-Fiction at the IAWTV Awards and participated as a fellow in Hot Docs' Emerging Filmmaker Lab.



**Herman Johansen** is now based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, after 7 years in Los Angeles and 10 years in Kansas City, working as an actor and writer. He earned his Equity card while working in Kansas City theatres. In LA, he enjoyed success in a variety of short films, indie features and television. His training, intensity and dry humor have led to highly praised performances of richly flawed and complex characters. In 2019 he was given the 'best emerging performance' award at the Chesapeake Film Festival for his work in the feature film, *The Land*. In addition to acting, Herman has extensive directing, writing and casting credits. His play, *Fading Light*, was selected for the 2015 New York International Fringe Festival. One of the films he scripted (*The Unnecessary Salvation of Mary McDaniel*) garnered 3 film festival wins as best short film. His television pilot, *Man on the Roof*, was recently selected as a Top 20 finalist in the Los Angeles International Screenplay contest. He is writing a feature film for an LA filmmaker and a novel set in New Mexico. Member: AEA, SAG-AFTRA.



While pursuing a theological studies degree and training to become a national level sprinter, **David Johnson's** work as a volunteer youth mentor brought him on several trips overseas where he began to grow as a photographer. As opportunities to share his images increased, he soon discovered photography's potential to fulfill a lifelong desire to understand people and their stories. David's work has brought him around the globe traveling throughout East Africa, Central America, Asia, India, and Eastern Europe. His images are prominently featured in the award-winning global re-branding for Motorola Solutions and have appeared in Times Square, Fitness Magazine, Michigan Avenue Magazine, and many other national and international forums. He has done extensive work with several non-profit and international aid organizations helping to raise funds for under-resourced communities in the developing world.



**Alan R. Kay** is Principal Clarinetist and a former Artistic Director of Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and serves as Principal Clarinet with New York's Riverside Symphony and Little Orchestra Society. Mr. Kay's honors include the Classical Recording Foundation Samuel Sanders Award, the C.D. Jackson Award at Tanglewood, a Presidential Scholars Teacher Award, and the 1989 Young Concert Artists Award with the sextet Hexagon featured in the prizewinning film, "Debut." A founding member of the Windscape Quintet, he is a regular guest in chamber music venues throughout the world, including the Yellow Barn, Orlando (Holland), Bowdoin, and Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society Festivals, and the Cape May Music Festival, where he curated a concert series for 25 years. Mr. Kay taught at the Summer Music Academy in Leipzig, Germany in 2004 and teaches at the Manhattan School of Music, The Juilliard School and Stony Brook University, where he also serves as Executive Director of the Stony Brook University Orchestra. He has served on the juries of international chamber music competitions in Trapani, Italy and Rolduc, Holland, Young Concert Artists International Auditions, Concert Artist Guild Auditions, and the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition.

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**William Kenower** is the author of *Fearless Writing: How to Create Boldly and Write With Confidence*, *Write Within Yourself: An Author's Companion*, the forthcoming *Everyone Has What It Takes: A Writer's Guide to the End of Self-Doubt*, and the Editor-in-Chief of *Author* magazine. In addition to his books he's been published in *The New York Times*, *Writer's Digest*, *Edible Seattle*, *Parent Map*, and has been a featured blogger for the *Huffington Post*.



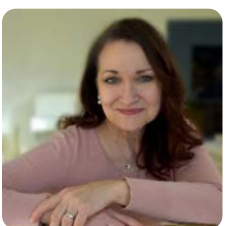
**Elizabeth Kilpatrick** is active as music teacher, an arts administrator, and a violinist in Richmond, VA. She currently serves as the Administrative Coordinator for the Chamber Music Society of Central Virginia in addition to her teaching positions at the Greater Richmond School of Music, The Music Tree, and her private violin and piano studio. Elizabeth is passionate about teaching and sharing the benefits of music with her students. She strongly believes in the importance of music and the arts in the lives of all people. In addition to her teaching positions, Elizabeth serves as an auxiliary violinist for the Richmond Symphony and is a regular gig violinist in Richmond, VA. Elizabeth completed her Bachelor's degree in Violin Performance and Arts Administration and Management at the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas, Austin in 2020. She has studied with the Suzuki Association of the Americas to receive training in the first three Suzuki method books.



**John Klein** ([www.windycitycamera.com](http://www.windycitycamera.com)) is a freelance cinematographer and an adjunct professor of film courses at Depaul University and Flashpoint Chicago. He is also the producer of Glass City Films, a production company through which he has directed multiple award-winning short and feature-length films, including the Kickstarter-funded post-apocalyptic thriller *Chrysalis*.



**Juan de Lascurain** is an artist-designer from Mexico City. He travels the world painting and exhibiting his work as well as licensing and commercializing his brand Dream Big. He is also a sought after speaker about entrepreneurship, design and inspiration to executives from companies, at conferences and expos around the world!



**Denise Laurin-Donatelle** is an artist, art educator, mentor and art historian. She has exhibited widely throughout the Chicago area at Triangle Gallery, The Fine Arts Building Gallery, Chicago Art Open, The Chicago Cultural Center, and many other locations. In 2009, she relocated to New York City, returning to Illinois in 2014. While in New York, she exhibited her work at a number of venues and led a group show under the sponsorship of the Museum of Modern Art. A constant in Denise's work is the emphasis on the figure, particularly that of the dancer, to express the universal idea of moving from darkness into light. Her media include graphite, charcoal, pastel, oil painting, gold leaf, collage and digital. Through her business, Living Creatively, she teaches academic realism in drawing and painting. She believes art is integral to life and guides her students to greater skill and sense of accomplishment through art. In addition to art instruction, Denise provides art presentations and mentoring through the SEA Satira platform. Prior to her fine art practice, she managed a graphic design business and won numerous local and national awards for her work. She was honored as "Woman of the Year" by Women in Design/Chicago for her excellence in design and for the example she set for other designers with her approach to work/life balance. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in studio art and art history, and a Masters of Arts in art history from Northern Illinois University. For more info: [www.livingcreatively.info](http://www.livingcreatively.info)



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**Francesca Leo** is a cutting edge flutist, educator, and performing arts health advocate. She has appeared as a soloist with the Manhattan School of Music Chamber Sinfonia and the New Albany Symphony Orchestra and has performed internationally in Italy and France. Francesca is the founder of <http://www.playingwithoutpain.com>, an award-winning interactive website and social media platform committed to connecting musicians with resources to treat and prevent performance-related injuries and maintain good mental health. She has presented her research at various institutions and events including the National Flute Association Convention, the Puerto Rico Flute Symposium, among others. Francesca currently serves on the board of the National Flute Association Performance Health Care Committee and the Performing Arts Medicine Association Young Professionals Committee and is the chair of the Puerto Rico Flute Symposium Wellness Committee. She has recently completed a certification in the Essentials of Performing Arts Medicine through the Performing Arts Medicine Association and is currently pursuing a certification as a Body Mapping Educator. She holds a masters degree in flute performance from the Manhattan School of Music and a bachelors degree from Bowling Green State University.



**Robin Liefeld** is an author and artist who teaches workshops in her art studio, at local guilds, creative retreats, and online. She began her art journey six years ago with textile art, which has blossomed into mixed media art, online summits, podcasts, and book publishing. Since then she learned how to build a website, navigate social media, learn marketing techniques and find her tribe. She shows her art in galleries, coffee shops, and office buildings. Robin's book, "I Can Do Hard Things: A Bravery Journal" helps women explore where they have been and where the still long to go. Her original art is featured on a line of notebooks. She loves to share her story to help others make the most out of their art career.



**Paul Logan** believes story-telling is the key ingredient to influentially impact the direction of our life. Paul brings 15+ years of branding expertise, People (HR) leadership, and Talent operations. Humbled to have implemented effective, efficient, and measurable talent strategies for global organizations like, Eataly and Soho House & Co. More recently Paul founded KeenOnYou.biz to fuel his passion for people, process, and branding their career stories for hire.- Choose a job you love, and never work a day in your life.



**B. Jeffrey Madoff** is the founder of Madoff Productions, based in New York City. His company collaborates with ad agencies, public relations firms and directly with clients to produce commercials, branded content and live streaming events. Madoff began his career as a fashion designer. He was chosen one of the top 10 designers in the U.S. then switched careers to film and video production. Madoff edited and directed award winning commercials, documentaries and web content around the world for clients such as Ralph Lauren, Victoria's Secret, and Tiffany. He authored "Creative Careers: Making a Living With Your Ideas" an Amazon Bestseller based on the class he developed and teaches at Parsons School of Design, in NYC. Madoff is also a playwright and theater producer. His play "Personality: The Lloyd Price Musical", based on the life of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame legend Lloyd Price will have its world premiere in February of 2022 at People's Light Theater.



**Rachel Maher** currently works as a Senior Visual Experience Designer for a Software as a service company. Rachel has partnered with the following companies on a variety of projects and capacities: Hewlett Packard (HP), Kellogg's, Mobile 22, Green Cab, Urban SDK, FONIA International, Independence Realty Trust (IRT), and more. She can help answer questions in areas of graphic design, interaction design, design research, in-house design, freelancing, designing for demand generation teams, and designing for product marketing teams.



**Abbi Manoucheri** is an actor, director, and playwright, who has worked with Willamette University Theatre Company, the Wyoming Theatre Festival, and the True Acting Institute and has experience in Devising, Japanese Noh and Kyogen theatre, Buto, and the Meisner and Michael Chekov acting techniques. Her writing credits include her plays Sincerely, Johanna, Lipstick: A Feminist Play, and her solo performance What, and Leave Showbusiness? which premiered in Salem, Oregon in 2017. She specializes in teaching the Meisner acting technique and has made a career of acting using this method and teaching it through her directing work and actor coaching across the United States.

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**David Marts** has been a graduate admissions professional with Columbia College Chicago for 20 years. In that time he has worked and collaborated with thousands of artists, entertainers and creatives on various academic and artistic endeavors. Currently he is the Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions and will be moderating the panel Graduate School and the Self Employed Artist: Columbia College Chicago Panel Discussion. In his spare time, David is an avid reader, crafter, DIYer and (closet) artist.



**Jennifer McCord** is a 30 year veteran of the publishing trade. Throughout her career, Jennifer has worked in nearly every aspect of the industry—as a writer, editor, instructor, creativity coach and consultant. She lends her expertise in the book business to writers and publishers through her consulting and coaching business, Jennifer McCord Associates. Currently, she is also an Associate Publisher for Camel Press and Coffeetown Press. Jennifer can be contacted at [www.jennifermccord.com](http://www.jennifermccord.com)



**Molly Miklosz** is an artist based out of Western Springs, IL. She graduated from Concordia University Chicago in 2019 with a BA in Visual Arts Education and a minor in Spanish. After graduation, Molly spent the next year applying for a variety of art based jobs, and subbed in classrooms. In January of 2020, she accepted for a position at a new charter high school in Chicago's loop, called Intrinsic Monroe. This has been her first official year of teaching. Being fully remote since September, she has learned a lot about teaching her own content, learning, and creating in a pandemic. For the past 5 years, Molly has also worked as an architectural docent for Wendella Sightseeing (one of Chicago's finest boat tour companies). During the pandemic, she launched a personal creative campaign to draw each day. Molly also launched a very successful fundraiser for a local homeless shelter by drawing people's homes, with all the proceeds going to the shelter. Molly states, "creating during a pandemic is hard, but it really has the power to save others and oneself. If anything, 2020 and COVID have taught me just that."



Award-winning bestselling author **Allie Pleiter** writes both fiction and non-fiction working on as many as four books at a time. She teaches creative people how to be consistently, dependably productive while teaching high-performing professionals how to create the vital content today's marketing requires. The author of over 40 published titles Allie has spent a decade in the publishing profession with over 1.4 million books sold worldwide. In addition to her own writing career, Allie maintains an active writing productivity coaching practice and speaks regularly on faith, the creative process, women's issues, and her very favorite topic—The Chunky Method of time management. Visit her website at [www.alliepleiter.com](http://www.alliepleiter.com) to learn more.



**Heather Pontonio** is the Senior Program Director at the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation where she is responsible for national strategy and administration of the Art Program portfolio focused on professional practices for both artists and curators. Heather has been instrumental in the launch of Artists Thrive, a national tool to assess and improve conditions for artists. She serves on the Appalachia Funders Network Steering Committee and CAA's Services to Artists Committee. Heather has a master's degree in Public Administration from New York University and a bachelor's degree in Arts Administration from the State University of New York at Fredonia.



**Dr. Greta Pope** is an Internationally acclaimed vocalist, author, educator, blogger, podcaster and philanthropist. She has performed in 20+ countries and her voice has been featured on numerous national commercials and voice-overs. Dr. Pope hosts "The Business Savvy Singer Podcast," featuring professional singers and their journeys to success. She holds a Ph.D. in Business and is the founder of PrivateMusicStudio.net, providing online education to build sustainable careers in music. [www.gretapope.com](http://www.gretapope.com) [www.PrivateMusicStudio.net](http://www.PrivateMusicStudio.net)



**Brian Prairie** spent his childhood drawing comics and painting, and for the past decade he's channeled his creativity professionally by widening his artistic skill set which now includes experience in illustration, motion graphics, and animation. He has also become intimately familiar with all aspects of video production, and his many talents include set design, storyboarding, building computer generated models, camera operator, non-linear editing, and compositing. Brian has logged countless hours managing projects from start to completion, and works in tandem with his clients to create the best final product possible. He is currently Chief Creative Officer at Pathfinder.

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Artist Collective is the brainchild of CEO and artist manager extraordinaire **Evan Price**. After 15 years in the industry, he has had firsthand experience in every corner of industry. Reinforcing that knowledge with a Bachelors Degree in Music Business from Columbia College Chicago, he offers his expertise through online trainings and handcrafted consultations. His mindful approach encourages artists to invest in personal branding, creating real fan connection, while focusing on collaboration rather than competition. Living that sentiment, he invites his impressive network to share their expertise through Industry Chats, giving independent artists access they could have only dreamed of!



From an early age **Emilie Procsal** loved to draw and paint, leading me to major in fine arts in college with a focus on drawing. My college degree created a foundation for my continued development in business and art. Moving out of 12 years of product development, I now utilizing my artistic eye capturing everything from people to architecture with my camera. I specialize in real estate, portraiture, family and product photography.



**Maria Rapetskaya** is the founder of Undefined Creative, a Brooklyn-based creative production company, specializing in motion graphics. She has built the company's reputation with clients like A+E Networks, NHL, NBC Universal, and the United Nations on good old-fashioned customer service and consistent execution on brand, on time, and on budget. Despite her creative director title, she stubbornly remains a hands-on creative in both design and production, doing what she truly loves on a daily basis. Maria is dedicated to professional volunteering and mentoring, especially helping young women develop careers that holistically reflect their goals. She teaches, writes, and speaks as often as she can, appearing in Adobe's 99U, HOW Design, Business Rockstars, Fast Company, and many others. A near-native New Yorker, Maria lives in Brooklyn with her husband and a few plants, but escapes often –with 60+ countries under her belt and counting.



**Mari Reisberg**, LPC is a therapist, coach, performer, podcast host of the Sustaining Creativity Podcast and creativity cultivator. She holds a BFA in Acting from the University of Hartford's Hartt School and an MA in Somatic Counseling Psychology, Dance/Movement Therapy, from Naropa University. She has shared her Sustaining Creativity work with performers at universities across the country and has shared her somatic psychology expertise in the acting book Roadblocks in Acting by Rob Roznowski. She has worked with performers and non-performers in 1:1 coaching programs. She has designed and executed Dialectical Behavioral Therapy programs for hospital settings, clinics and had the privilege of supporting therapy interns in an addiction recovery facility.



**Rebecca Reuland** is an Internship and Career Advisor for the Career Center at Columbia College Chicago. She has a BFA in Photography from Columbia and MA in Photography from Sotheby's Institute of Art in London. Rebecca worked for a well renowned architectural photography firm and interned at museums and archives in Chicago and London. She has been an arts educator for over a decade serving in various roles such as a teaching artist, mentor and most recently as an adjunct professor. She is also a board member of the (APA) American Photographic Artists.



**Brent Rolland** graduated as valedictorian of the International Academy of Design and Technology with a BFA in Multimedia Production and Design in 2005. Since that year, Brent has grown as an artist with Fig Media as a DJ, audio tech, drummer/percussionist, and emcee/host. Brent has been a speaker at the SEA Conference in 2016 and 2017, and looks forward to being with students to support them with their next steps in their artistry, dreams, and careers.



**Jeffrey Ross** is an award-winning commercial photographer traveling the world extensively for various projects and assignments. Whether he's working for a corporate client, a non-profit, or a personal narrative project, getting to the heart of the story is always his goal. He regularly blogs about his various travels and adventures, and loves to share his stories with others. Jeffrey's images can be found in magazines, advertisements, books, and personal collections. He often speaks to college students and others just starting to work in the creative arts fields, helping them make their passion a reality.

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**Elizabeth T Russell** helps businesses protect their most important assets by providing thoughtful, thorough counsel in the fields of copyright, trademark and digital business law. She also maintains a vibrant arts law practice and the author of *Copyright Conversations: What Estate Planners Need to Know* (Ruly Press 2019); *Arts Law Conversations: A Surprisingly Readable Guide for Arts Entrepreneurs* (Ruly Press 2014); and *Art Law Conversations: A Surprisingly Readable Guide for Visual Artists* (Ruly Press 2005). *Arts Law Conversations* was awarded a gold medal in the 2014 Independent Publisher (IPPY) Awards. *Art Law Conversations* earned a rating of "Essential" from the American Library Association's CHOICE Magazine and was included on CHOICE's 2006 list of Outstanding Academic Titles. Elizabeth is remarkably fluent in plain English.



**Brandy Sales** started his career in the arts right after high school when he and 2 of his friends started a performance group called, "The Bucket Band." None of them were drummers but they were all entrepreneurs at heart. In their short 4 years together, he made enough money to help himself through college. "The Bucket Band" experience taught him about marketing, business relationships, dedication and hard work. Now, he is an International Award Winning Video Producer and Speaker who works with the Real Estate and Non Profit Industries. In 2019, he moved to Knoxville, Tennessee because his business was invested in by Karen Coffey, who is the #1 results oriented Real Estate Coach for Women in North America. While overseeing Karen's media production, he also manage his Video Production company in Boston, MA. Outside of producing video, he enjoys his family, cooking, boxing, traveling, the symphony, hiking and chicken wings!



**Melissa Sallée** is a classically trained ballerina who studied with Maria Tallchief and Ballet Chicago and the former Assistant Director of Dance>Detour, an integrated, professional dance company based in Chicago. Currently, Sallée works with Inclusive Arts Vermont as an Artist-in-Residence in therapeutic educational settings, a program of John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In addition to teaching classical ballet and professional work within integrated movement, Sallée was a founding member of ReinventAbility and served as Director of Veteran Programs, using movement to benefit newly-disabled veterans and those with severe physical disabilities at Illinois Center for Rehabilitation & Education. Sallée has worked full-time as an artist since she was fifteen years old. Beyond teaching, leading workshops, performing, and choreographing, Sallée is a fierce and loyal advocate who has worked with the Congressional Arts Caucus as an Illinois Delegate as well as having served on several state and municipal task forces to improve universal access, disability rights, and access to the arts.



**Kelly Schmader** is the Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions for the School of Graduate Studies at Columbia College Chicago, as well as a part-time instructor for the Creative Communities 200 level course, Chicago Performs: the Art of Drag. Schmader is a 2019 graduate of Columbia's Master of Arts Management program. She is the director of admissions for the Master of Arts Management, Entrepreneurship for Creatives MA, Civic Media MA, Interaction Design MA, Strategic Communication MA, and the Combined Degree BA|MA programs at Columbia.



**Carin Silkaitis** is the Allen and Lynn Turner Chair of the Theatre Department at Columbia College Chicago. Theatre credits include: Mama in *A SHAYNA MAIDEL* (TimeLine), Mother/Attorney in *MACHINAL & Me in I DO TODAY* (Greenhouse), Holly in *VISITING* (Artemisia), Chloe in *LIPS TOGETHER*, *TEETH APART* (Eclipse), Doctor Manor in *SONS OF THE PROPHET & Mama/Sherry/Vera in DISTRACTED* (u/s ATC), Queen Margaret in *RICHARD III* (Oak Park), Izzy in *RABBIT HOLE* (u/s Goodman), Dean Wreen in *SEVEN HOMELESS MAMMOTHS WANDER NEW ENGLAND* (Theater Wit). TV/Film credits include: Co-Stars on *CHICAGO FIRE* and *RED LINE*, Nurse in the SAG Feature *UNEXPECTED*, Joy in *BEING HERE*, Kathy in *PRECIOUS THINGS*, and Maggie in *BLOOD AND WATER* as well as numerous commercial, industrial, and voiceover credits. Carin is a graduate of the School at Steppenwolf, and she received her MFA from the Theatre Conservatory at Roosevelt University. Carin is member of AEA, and she is represented by Gray Talent Group.

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**Justin Sinkovich** is an associate professor and the Graduate Program Director in the Business and Entrepreneurship Department at Columbia College Chicago. His teaching, research, and work focuses primarily on self-management, entrepreneurship, digital media marketing and music business. He is a reputable musician and music producer as well



**Kiela Smith-Upton** has 25 yrs experience planning and creating collaborative community based mural projects, on time and on budget. She has seasoned skills in education, training, legal services sales, customer service, team building, residential real estate investing, mortgage lending, project management, and is currently completing The Rehab Network NFP's Community Development and Empowerment training series. Kiela was raised in a family of entrepreneurial licensed architects where she learned about the spectrum of architecture, design/build and developer/owner services. She is a charismatic and servant leader who loves inspiring others and connecting them to resources. Her network of professional relationships, public speaking skills, and creative problem solving abilities have provided solutions for the unmet or unspoken needs of her clients and their constituents, with an inspiring joie de vivre. She is a seasoned professional and artist who earned a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has a Masters in life experience of entrepreneurship. Kiela has rarely seen art space developed for artist ownership and is committed to making this a reality locally and nationwide.



**Jenna Spinelle** loves a good story and has spent the past 15 years telling them as a journalist, marketing professional, and most recently, as a podcaster. She is the communications specialist for the McCourtney Institute for Democracy at Penn State, where she hosts and produces the Democracy Works podcast in collaboration with WPSU, central Pennsylvania's NPR station. She is also the founder of The Democracy Group, a network of podcasts about civic engagement, civil discourse, and democracy. When she's not podcasting, Jenna plans and executes all of the McCourtney Institute's external communications. She also teaches journalism in Penn State's Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications and works with national and international clients as a freelance writer and marketer.



**Daniel Sroka** is a fine artist who creates abstract photography that illuminates our everyday experience with the natural world. His art has been purchased by private collectors as well as distinctive resorts, spas, restaurants, and wellness offices around the world. Before he became a full-time artist in 2002, he was a graphic designer specializing in brand marketing. Daniel was the original creative director for Yahoo!, and in the pioneering days of the internet, he helped transform them from a quirky start-up into a globally-recognized brand. He then used his marketing and internet experience to launch his art career, as well as start a successful online business inspired by his art.



**Phil Tyler** recently moved back to Chicago from L.A. after working in L.A. for over 13 yrs. He was a Director/ 1st A.D./Second Unit Director/Stunt coordinator for 7yrs of those 13yrs before jumping in front of the camera as a full-time actor. He has been SAG/AFTRA since 2009, getting his SAG card through stunts on Fast & Furious 4. Phil went to Columbia College for directing and started acting to become a better director but fell in love with acting. When not in front of the camera he's working behind it. TV episodics include "CHICAGO P.D.," "EMPIRE," "BALLERS," "S.W.A.T.," "VERONICA MARS," "THE GOLDBERGS," "CSI CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION," "AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.," "REVENGE," "THE PLAYER" and "THE FOSTERS." Recurs on "DAYS OF OUR LIVES," "MARRIED" and "JANE THE VIRGIN". Currently Recurring on "NEXT" a new sci fi action series on FOX. Latest film was Marvel's "VENOM" opposite TOM HARDY (Phil did his own stunts). SUPPORTING LEAD ROLE in feature film WAKE opposite BRUCE WILLIS & BEN KINGSLEY (also did his own stunts). Supporting role opposite DAX SHEPARD, VINCE D'ONFRIO & KRISTEN BELL in feature film CHIIPS. Phil is also a professional stuntman, martial artist, MMA, athlete and stunt coordinator - fighting, action sequences, weapons (guns, knives, swords and daggers), boxing, and wrestling. Also precision driving with cars & trucks. Excellent Comedic skills, studied/performed improv at Second City, Chicago. Keegan Michael Key of "Key and Peele" and Bob Kulhan of Business Improv were his improv teachers at Columbia College Chicago.

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Known as “Chicago’s Own Community Chest”, **Cruel Valentine** is an award-winning, international burlesque entertainer, adult film performer, dominatrix, actor, dancer, writer, and artist. Valentine began performing the art of burlesque in 2007. Since then, they have spent the past several years performing their way across the nation and abroad, racking up multiple awards and honors. Valentine is an independent performer, producer, and teacher of burlesque, as well as an adult performer with The Lust Garden, featured on Pink Label. Most recently, their acclaimed erotic film, “Mirror, Mirror”, won the award for Best Solo at the Unholy Fans Black Queer Porn festival, presented by Strapped Toronto. CruelValentine.com is your go-to for all things Valentine, including a line of pasties and other titillating burlesque accessories. In addition to touring and teaching privately, Valentine has worked as a board member with several Chicago performance art organizations, as well as offering business consulting services to alternative, creative, and adult companies. They hold a BA in musical theatre performance and will soon hold an MA in arts management from Columbia College Chicago, where they are also a teaching assistant. Valentine also holds a professional certificate in diversity & inclusion from Cornell University. Their teaching credits include various educational and speaking engagements both domestically and abroad, including workshops at the collegiate level at several of the nation’s major universities, covering a wide range of topics including dance instruction, higher education, business, sexual health, sex worker rights, and more. With extensive experience in theatre, music, and dance, Cruel Valentine is a triple threat and then some, fusing multiple styles in their performances. A dedicated storyteller, they are never afraid to go there or to make a mess with their art. For booking, press, or other inquiries, please contact [info@CruelValentine.com](mailto:info@CruelValentine.com).



Since 2000, **Lidia Varesco Racoma** of Lidia Varesco Design has been empowering organizations to make a change through branding and marketing design. With over two decades of experience, Lidia is known not only for her ability to express an organization’s mission—but also for her friendly, approachable working style. She collaborates with associations, nonprofits, higher education and small businesses to create strategic, content-driven design. Lidia blogs about branding and marketing for her own blog as well as small business blogs and leads in-person branding and marketing workshops for local businesses and nonprofits. She has been featured in HOW Magazine and various design and small business books.



**Gary Vaughan** has a passion for helping business owners through his consulting firm where he specializes in financial sustainability and growth. He serves on several civic committees and nonprofit boards. He has also been a judge for the Wisconsin Governor’s Business Plan Contest for the past several years. Gary is a lecturer of economics/entrepreneurship at Lawrence University.



What do you get when you mix mental health challenges with a passion for drumming? A dynamic speaker and musician who delivers engaging presentations with raw energy and a fresh perspective on Diversity & Inclusion! **Mike Veny** is a highly sought-after keynote speaker, corporate drumming event facilitator, author, and luggage enthusiast. Seriously, you’d completely get it if you did all the traveling he did! He’s the author of the book *Transforming Stigma: How to Become a Mental Wellness Superhero & The Transforming Stigma Workbook*. As a 2017 PM360 ELITE Award Winner, Mike is recognized as one of the 100 most influential people in the healthcare industry for his work as a patient advocate.



**Laura Weathered** applies creative skills to practical problems within a community context and is dedicated to cooperative strategies that empower artistic activity as a sustainable part of community development. She initiated, served as project manager, and currently lives in the Bloomingdale Arts Building (formerly called Acme Artists Community), a \$3.5m permanent, affordable work/live condo community and Chicago’s only artist housing designed, developed, and owned by professional artists. Acme demonstrates affordable housing from a consumer’s perspective, eliminating middlemen yet offering artists substantial input on design and development. Laura has an MFA from the University of Southern California and a Postgraduate Certificate in Urban planning/Affordable housing from Spertus Institute. As an artist/cultural activist she founded the Near NorthWest Arts Council in 1986 as an artist directed resource center.

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**DIANNE H.B. WELSH** is the Hayes Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship and Founding Director of the Entrepreneurship Programs at The University of North Carolina Greensboro. Dianne has held three endowed chair and started three entrepreneurship programs/centers. She is the 2015 Fulbright-Hall Distinguished Chair for Entrepreneurship for Central Europe. She has visited or lectured in 50 plus countries, including the University of Venda, South Africa where she trained 30 professors in entrepreneurship. Dr. Welsh won the Legacy Award from the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers and the Barbara Hollander Award for Lifetime Contributions to Family Business from the Family Firm Institute.



A rare talent who grabs you by the heart and says “Recognize” – Poet, author, performer, songwriter, community “Artist” and speaker, **Bettina “Poet Gold” Wilkerson** is pushing the boundaries of poetry and the spoken word. Living with a chronic illness since childhood, Poet Gold brings a soul-searching insight about the human existence, love, dreams, challenges, and triumph. Appointed the 2017 and 2018 NYS Dutchess County Poet Laureate, Poet Gold is the recipient of numerous awards. With countless recitations, she has opened for Grammy-nominated artists and has spoken at renowned organizations. Poet Gold’s speaking engagements and non-traditional poetry workshops engage audiences in understanding the direct connection between literacy, goal setting, and the achievement of their dreams. Presently she is the co-host for the iHeart Radio podcast “Finding Out with Pete and The Poet Gold”. Her distinct voice will be heard, playing the role of God, in the upcoming animated short film “The Creation” poem by James Weldon Johnson, directed by award winning animated film maker, Steve Leeper. Poet Gold is an activist of the heart. Her words inspire to explore the essence of humanity.



**Ed Wimp** is an attorney, speaker, author, artist manager, and musician from Orlando, Florida. He started his career in music as a musician and began recording and touring as a musician himself before transitioning into the business side of music. After graduating college, Ed began transitioning into the business side of the music industry when he was presented with an opportunity to travel as part of the road management staff for R&B legends Earth Wind & Fire. From there, he was able to travel and tour with hip-hop icon A\$AP Rocky. Ed Wimp is the author of the book *Building Fans, Fame & Wealth: The 18 Revenue Streams of Music*. He travels to high schools, colleges, and conferences teaching aspiring musicians how to have a profitable music career. After extensive touring while working in the music industry, Ed Wimp earned a law degree and opened entertainment law firm, Wimp Legal, which he currently operates. Ed takes joy in the opportunity to help people in their times of need and is honored to be a member of the profession. Ed Wimp is a Renaissance Man. He has had many unique and outstanding experiences in his young life. Extensive International travel has been a cornerstone for Ed, which has given him a global perspective on life. Ed has enjoyed and retained the friendships of people from many parts of the world. Ed is an avid golfer and takes the opportunity to play whenever his busy schedule allows.



**Brian Witkowski** holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Vocal Performance, and his studies and career have taken him as far west as Hawaii and as far east as China with repertoire ranging from Gregorian Chant in cathedrals to musical theatre roles like Lancelot in *Spamalot*. An avid recitalist with a passion for Lieder, he is a past Stern Fellow at Songfest and his dissertation was on a set of ballads by Carl Loewe, a contemporary of Schubert from Northern Germany. He has taught at Rockford University, facilitated professional development seminars to teachers and artists through Arts Integration Solutions and other organizations, is regularly sought out as a speaker, and offers artists masterclasses and seminars in authenticity, financial empowerment, and leadership. He is the founder and CEO of The Lucrative Artist, where he provides business and leadership coaching to help artists position themselves to better have more of the authentic careers and lives they desire and deserve.