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## **Announcing ISPA's 2026 Board Appointments**

**New York, NY, USA** (February 9, 2026) – On behalf of the Board of Directors, the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) is pleased to announce the appointments of four new Board Members: Rachel Cooper (Director of Performing Arts and Culture as Diplomacy, Asia Society, USA), Laura Mackenzie-Stuart (Head of International, Creative Scotland, UK), Heloisa Pisani (International Affairs Manager, SESC - Servico Social do Comercio, Brazil), and Josephine Ridge (Executive Director, Arts, Baff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada). (Biographies attached.)

The ISPA membership unanimously approved the appointments at ISPA's Annual General Meeting, held virtually on February 9, 2026.

As the ISPA Board Chair, Alfonso Leal del Ojo oversees the organization's strategic direction in collaboration with the other directors and executive leadership

*"Our mission to advance leadership, foster the exchange of ideas, and build a diverse and engaged membership relies entirely on the strength and commitment of our members. It is through the exchange of your ideas that we tackle the many challenges we face. As we set our strategic priorities for the coming years, I am committed to ensuring our actions reflect the diversity and aspirations of our international community. I welcome the opportunity to work with our new Board members who are bringing a wealth of experience and fresh perspective."* said Board Chair, Alfonso Leal del Ojo

During the meeting, ISPA members also expressed their gratitude to former Board Chair, Alicia Adams (Founder and President, URUCUM Global Arts, USA), Collette Brennan (CEO, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Australia), Vivien Ku (CEO, C. F. Koo Foundation, Taiwan ROC), and Alisa Regas (Founding Principal, Creative and Executive Producer, Pomegranate Arts, Inc., USA) for their service and commitment as they concluded their terms on the Board.

*"I am very much looking forward to working alongside Alfonso as well as with the entire board as we continue to tackle the obstacles facing our global performing arts community."* said CEO David Baile.

Please view the [ISPA website](https://www.ispa.org) for more information on ISPA's Board Members.

**About ISPA:** The International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) is a global association of more than 500 arts management leaders from 56 regions, who come together with the shared goal of strengthening and developing the arts internationally. We achieve this by building leadership ability, recognizing and discussing field-wide trends and new developments, and deepening global exchange through the arts. ISPA members include presenters, performing arts organizations, artist managers, competitions, funders, consultants and other professionals working in the performing arts. Founded in 1948 by Patrick Hayes, 2024 marked ISPA's 75th Anniversary.

**About ISPA Congresses:** ISPA Congresses bring together performing arts leaders to discover the next great idea, strengthen relationships, and rejuvenate their passion for the arts. Programming is geared toward administrators, presenters, managers, agents, artists and government/cultural leaders.

ISPA holds two Congresses annually, one every January in New York City and a second Congress in a different region of the world. Recent International Congress locations include Guadalajara, Mexico (2019), Hong Kong (2022), Manchester, UK (2023), Perth, Australia (2024), and Lugano, Switzerland (2025). ISPA's 2026 mid-year Congress will be held Singapore and the [registration will launch on Feb 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026](#).

For more information about ISPA congresses, visit [https://www.ispa.org/page/congress\\_landing](https://www.ispa.org/page/congress_landing).

## [BIOGRAPHY OF THE BOARD MEMBERS]

### **Rachel Cooper**

(Director of Performing Arts and Culture as Diplomacy, Asia Society, USA)

Rachel Cooper is the Director of Performing Arts, Culture as Diplomacy at the Asia Society. She is recognized as a leader in the performing arts field, presenting, commissioning and producing traditional and contemporary works by Asian and Asian American artists. She is a participant at major conferences and commentator in the media (CNN, ABC, WNYC, New York Times) addressing global performing arts, international cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy. She has led many of Asia Society's cultural initiatives including Festival of Korea, Festival of Song: India Pakistan, Creative Voices of Muslim Asia, Crossovers: Performing Asia America among others. She has presented over 500 performances from across Asia and organized many international performing arts tours. She is the co-author of Making a Difference Through the Arts: Strengthening America's Links with Asian Muslim Communities. She received the Dawson Award for Sustained Programmatic Excellence from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, a Borough of Manhattan award for Preserving Cultural Diversity in New York City, the Global Citizen Diplomacy award for best practices in the performing arts and an 'Izzy' for programming excellence for Festival of Indonesia In Performance. Prior to moving to the Asia Society she organized the Festival of Indonesia In Performance, touring over 200 Indonesian artists across the U.S., reflecting both traditional and contemporary expressions. Ms. Cooper serves on the boards of the American Indonesian Culture and Education Foundation, Living Arts International (formerly Cambodian Living Arts) and Gamelan Sekar Jaya and is an advisor for the Center for Folklife at Smithsonian Institution and the US State Department's Center Stage Project. She lived in Indonesia for five years and is the co-founder of Balinese music and dance company, Gamelan Sekar Jaya. She did her undergraduate and graduate studies at UCLA in World Arts and Cultures and Dance Ethnology.



## **Laura Mackenzie-Stuart**

(Head of International, Creative Scotland, UK)

Laura is Head of International at Creative Scotland, the national body for funding the arts, screen and creative industries, and supporting connections to international markets and networks.

The role of the team is pivotal in creating new international opportunities for the cultural sector in Scotland, significantly through partnership working with global peer organisations. In addition, we advocate at a local and national governmental level for the value of international engagement and for continued investment in it.

Laura has worked in the arts since 1990 including as Deputy Director of the [Edinburgh Festival Fringe](#) for eight years supporting potential participants in the world's largest performing arts festival and with particular responsibility for developing its fundraising strategy.

Later, as Managing Director of [Universal Arts](#), Laura ran multiple venues during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe focusing on presenting international companies for which she and her organisation were acknowledged with both a Herald Angel and an Archangel award. Year-round Universal Arts specialised in producing and touring international theatre and dance.

## **Heloisa Pisani**

(International Affairs Manager, SESC - Servico Social do Comercio, Brazil)

[Heloisa Pisani](#) is Manager of the International Affairs Department at [Sesc São Paulo](#) (Social Service of Commerce), a private, non-profit institution founded in 1946 and active throughout Brazil.

Sesc develops initiatives across culture, education, sports, leisure, environment, and health, operating 44 sociocultural centers across the state of São Paulo and an extensive digital platform, [Sesc Digital](#), which offers free content to diverse audiences.

At Sesc São Paulo, Heloisa leads the design and coordination of international strategies and multilateral cooperation across multiple fields. Her work focuses on fostering intercultural dialogue, shaping multidisciplinary programs, and building sustainable partnerships among cultural institutions, governments, and international organizations. She is committed to expanding access to culture and strengthening global networks for creative exchange and institutional development.

## **Josephine Ridge**

(Executive Director, Arts, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada)

Josephine is Executive Director, Arts, for the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, a global organization based in the Canadian Rocky Mountains that provides learning, leadership and creative development opportunities in arts and culture across all disciplines. Prior to moving to Banff in 2024, she was Vice President, Programming for TO Live in Toronto.

Josephine's career reflects her interest in the arts across all forms, and her work has taken her from Melbourne to Sydney and now to Canada where she moved in 2016 to be Artistic Director of Luminato Festival. Before leaving Australia, she was Artistic Director of Melbourne's international arts festival. Her earlier career was focused on executive roles including 10 years as Executive Director for Sydney Festival, and leadership roles with The Australian Ballet, Australian Chamber Orchestra and Malthouse Theatre.

Her experiences throughout her career have reinforced her belief in the vital role that the arts play in achieving an open, tolerant, thoughtful and forward-looking society.

**Photos:** [https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSocietyforthePerformingArts/photos\\_albums](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSocietyforthePerformingArts/photos_albums)