

ISPA

International
Society for the
Performing Arts

NEW YORK CITY | JANUARY 13-15, 2026

**RESILIENCE:
A GLOBAL DIALOGUE**

#ISPA26NY

WELCOME!

Join us as resilience takes center stage. In an era marked by economic volatility, geopolitical conflict, and ever-increasing isolationism, the ability to work internationally has become increasingly complex for organizations, independent producers, and artists. Together, we will explore how we can sustain and develop international partnerships, foster creative exchange, and cultivate the resilience needed to thrive in an unpredictable world.

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ISPA

**International
Society for the
Performing Arts**



David Baile

Chief Executive Officer, ISPA,
United States [View Bio](#)

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome the 500 delegates who have joined us from 50 regions around the world. As we begin 2026, we turn our collective attention to the theme of resilience. There was no shortage of compelling theme proposals this year, but resilience felt the most encompassing—and the most urgent—providing the right tone with which to open the year. I extend my sincere thanks to our Co-Chairs, Josephine Ridge and Paul Tam, and to the entire Planning Committee for their inspiration, guidance, and invaluable contributions.

We are living in a time marked by complex and often difficult-to-navigate challenges. This conference invites us to explore the role of the arts in responding to those realities. The arts have a unique capacity to foster empathy and understanding, to inspire awareness and action, and, ultimately, to build community. ISPA's commitment to global exchange, leadership development, and thought leadership plays a vital role in contributing to broader society through the arts. Our Board, under the leadership of Chair Alfonso Leal del Ojo (The English Concert), remains deeply committed to advancing ISPA's mission and vision.

To our members: thank you. Like many organizations today, ISPA is navigating a period of significant readjustment, requiring difficult choices and renewed focus. We are grateful that you have chosen to be with us at this moment.

Thank you to all our delegates for investing your time and resources to join us in New York. Your presence and participation are truly valued.

Sincerely,
David Baile



Alfonso Leal del Ojo

Chair ISPA Board of Directors
Chief Executive
The English Concert, UK
[View Bio](#)

Dear Colleagues,

As we gather once again, I am reminded why coming to ISPA feels more relevant and important than ever. In a landscape where we must constantly justify the very existence of the arts, and where many artists and arts professionals struggle simply to even exist, the question of resilience takes on real meaning. How can we navigate ever shifting funding landscapes without losing what matters most? How can the arts continue to spark courage and connection when times feel so uncertain?

It can be tempting to give in to the difficulties we all face in our professional lives. Yet the resilience required (the grit!) in our work and in our daily lives is real. I am in awe of what so many of you do around the world to uplift this wonderful, precious, fragile thing we devote our lives to. It is my hope that this congress brings you inspiration, renewed energy, and a renewed sense of purpose.

I want to thank David, the staff, Josephine Ridge, and Paul Tam for putting together an excellent programme, as well as our panellists, committee and board members, funders, and sponsors; the list is endless. Most importantly, I want to thank you. Whether this is your first time here (welcome to the family!) or you are returning, thank you for being here with us. It is my hope that this congress brings you inspiration, a renewed sense of purpose and new friends to call upon when you need them.

Alfonso Leal del Ojo
Board Chair



Josephine Ridge

Co-Chair, NY26 Planning Committee
Executive Director, Arts
Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada
[View Bio](#)



Paul Tam

Co-Chair, NY26 Planning Committee
Executive Director, Performing Arts
West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
Hong Kong
[View Bio](#)

Dear ISPA Friends and colleagues,

Welcome to New York Congress 2026!

A belief in the importance of connectivity and mutual respect lies at the heart of the ISPA story, and these congresses offer all of us who attend them, an invaluable window of time in which to appreciate the potential of what that can mean.

Across the globe we see examples of economic volatility, geopolitical conflict and isolationism throwing challenges and obstacles in the path of artists and arts organisations, stifling or diverting their voices, and impacting the ability we all have to offer creative answers, to provoke and facilitate constructive dialogue and to hold the space for people to come together in the spirit of understanding.

It seems that ISPA's vision to strengthen communities and to further develop and promote the appreciation and recognition of the importance of the arts to society has never been more important than it is right now.

In considering the theme for the New York 2026 congress, we felt it important not to shy away from uncomfortable realities. We also felt that it is equally important to approach the topics we cover from a solution-oriented perspective and to provide a pathway of hope. If we truly believe that the arts can make a difference, then we want this to be a congress bursting with new ideas; one that is forward-looking and promotes both practical and creative responses.

With over 170 cities and 50 regions of the world represented and over 400 delegates including some of our industry's brightest young minds joining us as Fellowship Participants,

we have the chance to inspire and to be inspired. We have the chance to hear from each other and to learn about the rich variety of circumstances that can be found in the performing arts today. We have the chance to recognise and to celebrate resilience and to fully engage in a global dialogue.

It is important too to acknowledge that present circumstances make it risky or impossible for some of our colleagues to travel to be with us. That those of us who are here can meet in person and that together we can acknowledge the difficulties faced by those who can't, should be felt as an act of solidarity, and convey a message of support for all those in our creative sector.

So, over the next three days, please aim to meet as many new colleagues as you can so you can learn about the challenges and opportunities they are encountering and how they as creative leaders, artist and thinkers are responding to this complex environment.

In framing this year's congress, we had the privilege of working with a Planning Committee of incredible arts leaders drawn from the four corners of the world and from different generations. It has been a rich and collaborative process and one through which we were expertly steered by David Baile and his dedicated ISPA team. We would like to thank everyone who came together to bring us to this moment.

Enjoy!

Paul Tam and Josephine Ridge

We are proud to support our partners at ISPA and collaborators in the performing arts in the global dialogue on resilience in our community.

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NEW YORK 2026 CONGRESS

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Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company

Photo by Theo Cote



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11 DAYS 22 EVENTS 28 LEAD ARTISTS
January 7-17



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PROGRAM SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026

THE TIMES CENTER • 242 W 41st Street

11:30 - 15:45 **REGISTRATION/CHECK-IN (coffee)**

11:30 - 12:30 **NEW MEMBER WELCOME /
COMMUNITY BUILDING PROGRAM**

13:00 - 13:30 **OPENING CEREMONY AND WELCOME**

David Baile, CEO, ISPA, United States, [View Bio](#)

Murielle Borst Tarrant, Founder and Artistic Director, Safe Harbors, United States, [View Bio](#)

Alfonso Leal del Ojo, ISPA Board Chair, Chief Executive, The English Concert, United Kingdom, [View Bio](#)

Josephine Ridge, Executive Director, Arts, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada, [View Bio](#)

Paul Tam, Executive Director, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Hong Kong, [View Bio](#)

13:30 - 14:15 **PROVOCATION**

Nicola Benedetti, Festival Director, Edinburgh International Festival, United Kingdom, [View Bio](#)

14:15 - 14:30 **REGIONAL UPDATE | PANAMA**

Isaac Casal, Cellist and Founder of The Alfredo de Saint Malo International Festival (ASMF), Panama, [View Bio](#)

14:30 - 15:00 **NETWORK AND REFRESH**

15:00 - 16:45 **SESSION 1 | BREAKING OUT OF THE SILO:
CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION**

Speakers & Moderator*

Tola Akerele, CEO, National Theatre Nigeria,
Nigeria, [View Bio](#)

Tracy Day*, Co-founder and CEO, World Science
Festival, United States, [View Bio](#)

Adriane V. Jefferson, Executive Director,
Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs, City of
Atlanta, United States, [View Bio](#)

Samuel Wong, Co-Founder and Creative Director,
The TENG Company, Singapore, [View Bio](#)

HARD ROCK CAFÉ • 1501 Broadway

17:30 - 20:30 **OPENING RECEPTION**

MISS NELLIE'S • 321 W 44th Street

20:30+ **COCKTAIL KLATCH** (Event continues)



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2026

THE TIMES CENTER • 242 W 41st Street

9:00 - 16:00 REGISTRATION/CHECK-IN (coffee)**10:00 - 12:00 PITCH NEW WORKS****Anthony Sargent CBE**, International Cultural Advisor, United Kingdom, [View Bio](#)**12:00 - 13:30 PROEX (PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE) / LUNCH****13:30 - 13:45 REGIONAL UPDATE | VIETNAM****Tra Nguyen**, Founder/Theater-maker
The Run—A Theater Project, Vietnam [View Bio](#)**13:45 - 14:30 PROVOCATION****Peter Gelb**, General Manager, The Metropolitan Opera, United States, [View Bio](#)**Eugene Downes**, Cultural Director, Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland, [View Bio](#)**14:30 - 15:45 SESSION 2 | ADAPTING TO CHANGE:
RESPONSES TO SHIFTING FUNDING PRIORITIES**

Speakers & Moderator*

Sami Daoud, Executive Director, Breaking Walls Festival, Egypt, [View Bio](#)**Martin Inthamoussu***, Deputy Curator, Art Program at The World Bank, United States | Uruguay, [View Bio](#)**Kelly Langgard**, Director & CEO, Toronto Arts Council & Toronto Arts Foundation, Canada, [View Bio](#)**Paul Tam**, Executive Director, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Hong Kong, [View Bio](#)**15:45 - 16:15 NETWORK AND REFRESH****16:15 - 17:30 SESSION 3 | INDUSTRY FORUM:
THE ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY**

Speakers & Moderator*

Yuxi Cao, Media Artist/Visual Director
CAOYUXI STUDIO, China, [View Bio](#)**Kevin Cunningham***, Founding Artistic Director
3LD Art & Technology, United States, [View Bio](#)

#ISPA26NY

Annie Dorsen, Director and Writer, United States,
[View Bio](#)

Victor Morales, Professor, Artist, Montclair
University, United States, [View Bio](#)

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

19:00 - 23:30 **ISPA OUT ON THE TOWN**

MISS NELLIE'S • 321 W 44th Street

20:30+ **COCKTAIL KLATCH** (Event continues)

DEFINE YOUR PURPOSE,
IMPACT YOUR COMMUNITY,
MAKE CONFIDENT DECISIONS.

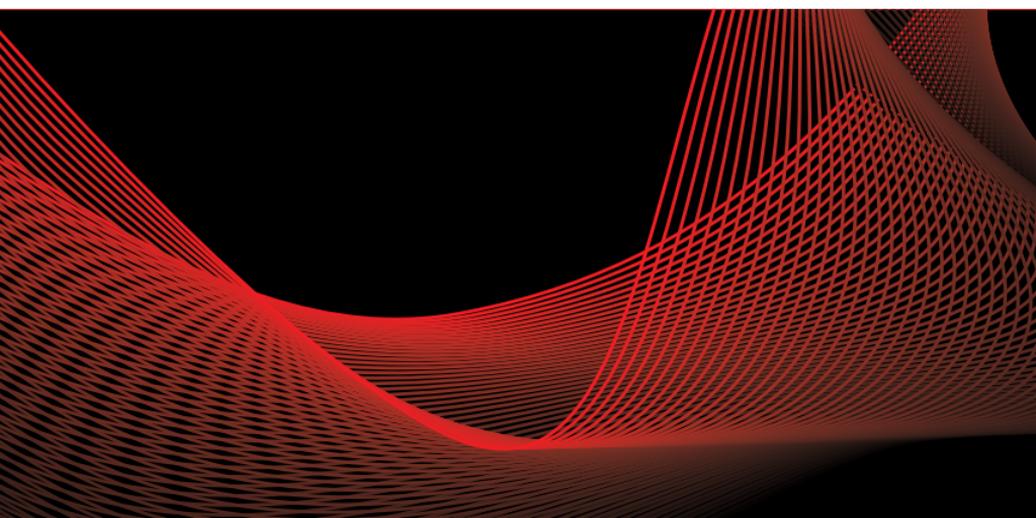


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PLANNING
& RESEARCH

*AMS at ISPA: Jon Faris
and Nora Fleury*

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026

THE TIMES CENTER • 242 W 41st Street

9:00 - 15:00 **REGISTRATION/CHECK-IN (coffee)**9:00 - 10:00 **SESSION 4 | COFFEE KLATCH**10:15 - 11:30 **BREAKOUT SESSIONS****ADVOCACY: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE**

Speakers & Moderator*

Ana Corbett, Producer, UPU Collective,
Aotearoa New Zealand, [View Bio](#)**Marie Fol**, Co-initiator, Live Arts Lab, Belgium,
[View Bio](#)**Brandall C. Jones***, Connectivity Director,
Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company,
United States, [View Bio](#)**Ashley Tucker**, Co-Executive Director, Artistic
Freedom Initiative, United States, [View Bio](#)**DESIGN: INNOVATION IN LIVE PERFORMANCE**

Speakers & Moderator*

Jon Faris*, Managing Principal, AMS Planning
& Research, United States, [View Bio](#)**Rasean Davonté Johnson**, Director of Design,
The University of Chicago, United States, [View Bio](#)**Adam Hockley**, Global Segment Development
Manager - Performing Arts & Musical Theatre,
d&b audiotechnik, United Kingdom, [View Bio](#)**Kathryn Nolan**, Managing Director/Partner -
Theatre Consultancy Americas, Charcoalblue
United States, [View Bio](#)11:45 - 13:00 **LUNCH**13:00 - 13:15 **ISPA FELLOWSHIP UPDATE****Elroy Fillis-Bell**, Chief Executive Officer, Joburg
Ballet, South Africa, [View Bio](#)**Micah Sofia Pinto**, Creative Producer/Co-Founder
& Artistic Director, Para Sa Sining Collaboratory
Inc., Philippines, [View Bio](#)

13:10 - 13:50 **PROVOCATION**

Omar Rajeh, Choreographer and Artistic Director, Maqamat & BIPOD Festival, France | Lebanon, [View Bio](#)

13:50 - 14:00 **REGIONAL UPDATE | BELARUS**

Katsiaryna Saladukha, Performing arts producer/ CEO and Founder, Arts KiT Centre for Cultural Initiatives, Belarus, [View Bio](#)

14:15 - 15:30 **SESSION 5 | CREATIVE RESISTANCE:
HOW THE ARTS RESPOND TO
CONFLICT AND CRISIS**

Speakers & Moderator*

Iman Aoun, Executive Director, ASHTAR Theatre, Palestine, [View Bio](#)

Kyu Choi, Artistic Director, Seoul Performing Arts Festival, South Korea, [View Bio](#)

Fizza Hasan*, Artistic Director, Theatre Wallay, Pakistan, [View Bio](#)

Kent Monkman, Artist, Canada | United States, [View Bio](#)

Ximena Vargas, Producer, video designer, Mapa Teatro - Laboratory of Artists, Colombia, [View Bio](#)

15:30 - 16:00 **NETWORK AND REFRESH**



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16:00 - 16:15 **INVITATION TO SINGAPORE**

16:15 - 17:00 **ISPA AWARDS PRESENTATION**

Host:

Gaurav Kripalani*, Artistic Director, Singapore Repertory Theatre, Singapore, [View Bio](#)

Awardees:

Gary Dunning, President and Executive Director, Celebrity Series of Boston, United States, [View Bio](#)

Dame Carol Colburn Grigor, DBE, Director, The Colburn Foundation, United States, [View Bio](#)

Martha Graham Dance Company, United States, [View Bio](#)

Teshome Wondimu, Executive Director, Selam, Sweden, [View Bio](#)

Amir Nizar Zuabi, Artistic Director, The Walk Productions, Palestine, [View Bio](#)

MISS NELLIE'S • 321 W 44th Street

20:30+ **COCKTAIL KLATCH**

SEE/HEAR

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could hear this?

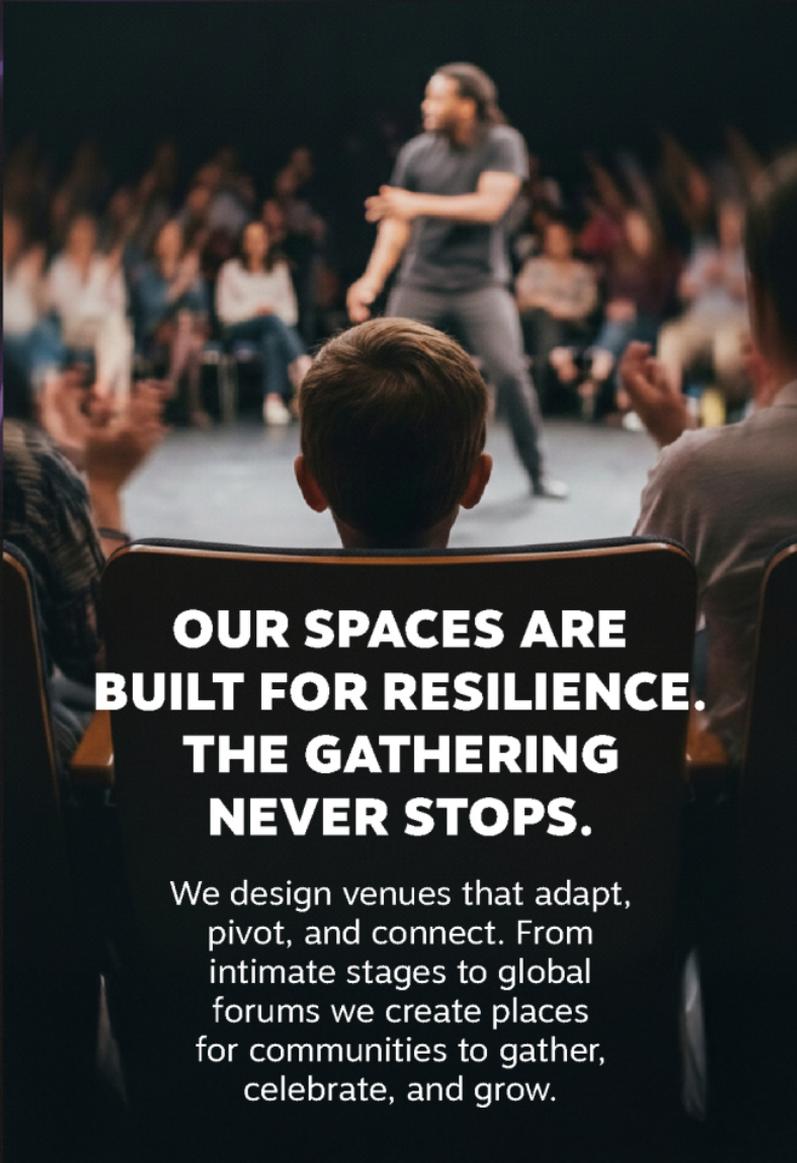



threshold
ACOUSTICS, AV AND EMPATHY



Cynthia Enviro at
Opening Night
PAC NYC,
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Programme Highlights

International Showcases
Pitching Works
Exhibition
Networking Events
Conversations
Cultural Offerings

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Mark the Date

AWARDS



AMIR NIZAR ZUABI

2026 Distinguished Artist
Award Recipient

Nominating Statement: “Amir Nizar Zuabi is an award-winning theater writer and director, former Artistic Director of ShiberHur, and former Associate Director of Young Vic London. Nizar is an artist addressing some of the most pressing issues of our time with compassion and honesty.”

Amir Nizar Zuabi is an award-winning playwright and director. He was the founding Artistic Director of ShiberHur Theater Company in Palestine, an Associate Director of the Young Vic Theatre, a member of the United Theaters Europe for artistic achievement, and an alumni of The Sundance Institute Theatre Program.

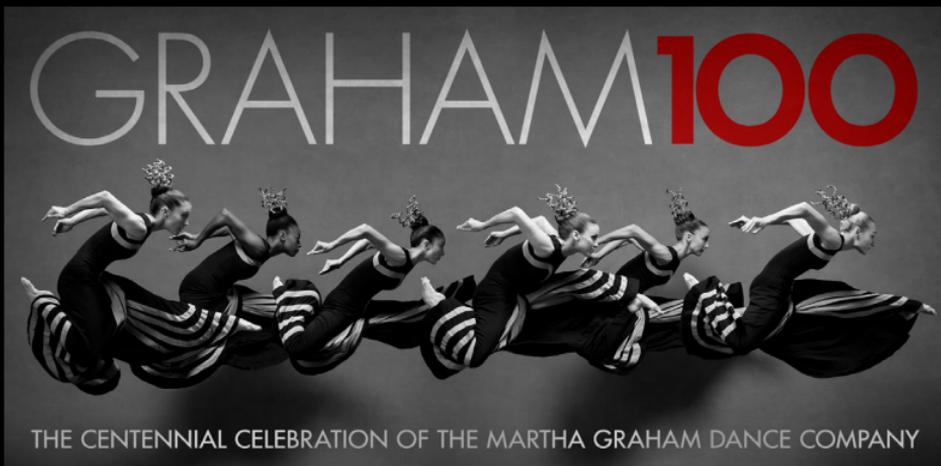
As Artistic Director of The Walk Productions he led *The Herds* (UN Live’s Top 10 Culture for Impact 2025) and *Little Amal* (Time Out New York’s No. 1 Art Event of 2022 and winner of the the RSGS Livingstone Medal for outstanding service of a humanitarian nature.)

In 2026 he will create The Walk Productions’ new work - *And still no mercy* - a contemporary dance-theatre piece born out grief, vulnerability and mercy in times of global upheaval.

His writing and directing credits include *I am Yusuf and This is my Brother*, *In the Penal Colony*, *Oh My Sweet Land The Beloved* (ShiberHur/Young Vic); *Three Days of Grief*, *West of Us The Sea*, *Mid Spring Musical*, *Dry Mud*, *Against A Hard Surface* (ShiberHur); *Last Ward*, *Who Killed You Asmahan*, *The Huta* and *Grey Rock* (Remote Theater Project, La Mama NYC).

Amir Nizar’s directing credits include: *Samson and Delilah* (Flanders Opera, Antwerp); *Jidarriya* by Mahmoud Darwish (Edinburgh International Festival, Bouffes du Nord and world

tour); *Forget Herostratus*, *Le Mallade Imaginer*, *War or More*, *Sneeze*, *Deep Sorrow*, *Fall Tale*, *When The World Was Green*, *Lanterns Of The King Of Galilee*, *Taha* and *The Comedy of Errors* (Royal Shakespeare Company).



MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

2026 Distinguished Artist Award Recipient

Nominating Statement: *“The Martha Graham Dance Company, was the singular most influential voice of contemporary dance in the 20th century. The artistic imprint continues as the company celebrates its centennial in 2026, inspiring global audiences and advancing Martha Graham’s enduring legacy.”*

Martha Graham and her Company have expanded contemporary dance’s vocabulary of movement and forever altered the scope of the art form by rooting works in contemporary social, political, psychological, and sexual contexts, deepening their impact and resonance.

Always a fertile ground for experimentation, Martha Graham Dance Company has been an unparalleled resource in nurturing many of the leading choreographers and dancers of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Merce Cunningham, Anna Sokolow, Erick Hawkins, Pearl Lang, Sir Robert Cohan, Donald McKayle, Elisa Monte, Jacquelyn Buglisi, Paul Taylor and many others.

Graham’s repertoire of 181 works has also engaged noted performers such as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Claire Bloom, Margot Fonteyn, Liza Minnelli, Rudolf Nureyev, Maya Plisetskaya, and Kathleen Turner. Her groundbreaking techniques and unmistakable style have earned the Company acclaim from audiences in more than 50 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.



DAME CAROL COLBURN GRIGOR, DBE

2026 Angel Award Recipient

Nominating Statement: *“Carol Colburn Grigor, CBE, Chevalier of France’s Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and inaugural Prince of Wales Medal for Philanthropy recipient, is a renowned philanthropist, arts advocate, and musician whose generosity has shaped classical music and the visual arts worldwide.”*

Carol Colburn Grigor lives in Dublin, Ireland, and travels extensively for both philanthropic and business purposes.

Her contributions to classical music and the visual arts have been recognized with numerous honours including Commander of the British Empire (CBE). She is an inaugural recipient of the Prince of Wales Medal for Philanthropy and has been admitted as a Chevalier into France’s Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Grigor’s university studies focussed on music. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from Indiana University School of Music and her Master of Musical Arts degree from Yale University School of Music. She also has received an Honorary Doctorate of Music from Edinburgh Napier University.

As a pianist, she performed extensively in the US and Europe, before turning to family business activities and philanthropic initiatives in UK, US, Europe and Australia, and now specifically in Ireland.

Carol Colburn Grigor is President of Dunard Fund USA, Chairman Emeritus and Board Member of the Colburn School and Chairman of the Colburn Foundation.

She is also a director of the Colburn Collection, the Colburn Music Fund, and Dunard Fund UK.

Grigor is a member of the Board of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, the Marlboro Music Festival and the Yale School of Music Board of Visitors. In August 2013, she was named Honorary Vice-President of the Edinburgh International Festival Society.

She is the Founder and member of the Royal High School Preservation Trust (Edinburgh).



TESHOME WONDIMU

2026 International Citation
of Merit Recipient

Nominating Statement: *“Teshome Wondimu has played a transformative role in presenting African music on the global stage. Through his vision, dedication, and unwavering commitment to cultural exchange, he has created platforms that amplify African artists, broaden audiences, and strengthen the continent’s artistic voice worldwide.”*

His professional journey includes founding Selam, collaborating with Swedish National Concerts, and serving as a multicultural consultant for i city of Stockholm. He has also served as a board member for institutions such as the Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärdsnämnden), Unga Klara, and the jazz club Fasching.

Teshome’s international work spans both East and West Africa, as well as Cuba and Vietnam, with a strong focus on festivals, cultural exchange, industry development, and institutional strengthening. He is the initiator of platforms including Panaf – the Pan-African Network for Artistic Freedom, CfCA – Connect for Culture Africa, and Muzikaw, and is a recipient of the Stockholm City Honorary Award.



GARY DUNNING

2026 Patrick Hayes Award
Recipient

Nominating Statement: *“Gary Dunning has dedicated over 40 years to the performing arts, shaping organizations, supporting artists, inspiring colleagues, and expanding access to live performance for local communities. Colleagues often describe him as a leader of integrity and honesty whose steady presence creates trust across the field.”*

Gary Dunning holds a B.A. from Princeton University and a Master’s Degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science. A veteran of performing arts administration, Gary began his career at American Ballet Theatre before becoming Executive Director of Houston Ballet in 1986. He returned to ABT as Executive Director in 1992. In 1996, he joined the Big Apple Circus as Executive Director. Gary was appointed the President and Executive Director of Celebrity Series of Boston in 2011, the fourth President in its then 79-year history. He is married to Anne Dunning and they live in Boston.

He has served on and chaired numerous panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Arts Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts. He also served as Chairman of the Board of DanceUSA, a national service organization for professional dance for several years. He has served on the Board of ArtsBoston and co-chaired Boston Mayor Walsh’s 2013 transition team for arts and culture. He currently serves on the board of the Bellforge Arts Center and on the Steering Committee of the Boston Cultural Leaders Coalition.

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1 Millennium Premier

133 W 44th St, New York, NY 10036 and

2 Millennium Hotel Broadway Times Square

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Accessible entrance on W 44th Street, between 6th Ave and 7th Ave.

S Accessible by **N, Q, R, W** (yellow line) (Times Square-42nd St) **1, 2, 3** (red line) (Times Square-42nd St) **7** (purple line) (Times Square-42nd St) **B, D, F, M** (orange line) (42nd St-Bryant Park)

3 The Times Center

242 W 41st Street, New York, NY 10036

S Accessible by **A, C, E** (blue line) (42nd St-Port Authority Bus Terminal) **B, D, F, M** (orange line) (42nd St-Bryant Park) **1, 2, 3** (red line), **N, R, W, Q** (yellow line) and **7** (purple line) (Times Square 42nd St)

4 Hard Rock Café

1501 Broadway, New York, NY 10036

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It is about a **5-minute walk** from The Times Center.

Québec connects
the world through
the performing arts



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at **ISPA 2026!**

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Québec 



ISPA International Society for the Performing Arts

ISPA 2026 SINGAPORE CONGRESS 19 - 22 MAY

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