



American Repertory Theater  
64 brattle street, cambridge, massachusetts 02138  
617.495.2668 TEL  
617.495.1705 FAX  
617.547.8300 TICKETS  
[www.americanrepertorytheater.org](http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, May 2, 2024

Contact: Rebecca Curtiss | [rebecca\\_curtiss@harvard.edu](mailto:rebecca_curtiss@harvard.edu)

## AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER ANNOUNCES 2024 COHORT MEMBERS OF ARTS & CULTURAL ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT LEARNING INTENSIVE

Program for Arts Leaders from Historically De-centered Communities  
Is Supported by The Barr Foundation

[COHORT IMAGE FOR DOWNLOAD](#)

Cambridge, MA—American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at Harvard University, led by Terrie and Bradley Bloom Artistic Director Diane Paulus and Executive Director Kelvin Dinkins, Jr., announced today members of the 2024 cohort of the **Arts & Cultural Organization Management (ACOM)** learning intensive.

**Arts & Cultural Organization Management (ACOM)** provides an executive education-style experience to arts leaders from communities that historically have not been centered in organizational leadership and development opportunities. The one-week program builds community and provides professional development with professors, community leaders, and artists to strengthen strategies and skills for creating more responsive and successful cultural institutions.

**ACOM** curriculum is tailored to meet the specific professional goals and interests of each cohort based on one-on-one conversations with upcoming participants and strategists from [UBUNTU](#), A.R.T.'s **ACOM** research and evaluation partner. Subject-matter experts from Harvard and beyond then create sessions that align with the surfaced common areas of focus.

This year's instructors include: **Harold Steward** (Executive Director, New England Foundation for the Arts), **Dr. Charmain Jackman** (Founder, InnoPsych, Inc.), **dr. monique liston** (Founder, Joyful Militant and Chief Strategist, UBUNTU Research and Evaluation), **Michael Bobbitt** (Executive Director, Mass Cultural Council), **Flavia Perea** (Director of the Mindich Program in Engaged Scholarship and a Lecturer on Sociology at Harvard University), **Bree Edwards** (ArtLab Director, Office of Provost, Harvard University), **Jamilah Bradshaw** (Program Officer, Arts & Creativity, Barr Foundation), **Brisa Areli Muñoz** (Artistic Director, Musical Theatre Factory), **Kara Elliott-Ortega** (Chief of Arts and Culture Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, City of Boston), **Sharon Quimbay**

**Nolasco** (Licensed Mental Health Clinician, dance/movement therapist and yoga therapist), **Samora Pinderhughes** (Visiting Artist in Residence at Harvard ARTLab), **Nielle Milinazzo** (Licensed Mental Health Clinician, Registered Art Therapist, Certified Clinical Trauma Professional, and Adjunct Professor), **Kelvin Dinkins, Jr.** (Executive Director, American Repertory Theater), **Priscilla H. Douglas** (PHDouglas & Associates), and **Tim Hall** (Assistant Professor in the Professional Music Department at Berklee College of Music).

ACOM's 2024 cohort includes: **afrikah selah**, **Celina Fernando**, **Desiré Graham**, **Dorian Block**, **Jaime Sharp**, **Jeremy Whitehead**, **Jessica Wong Camhi**, **Kandyce Whittingham**, **Katiana Rodriguez**, **Kelsey Fonise**, **Kenny Mascary**, **Kira Troilo**, **Letta Neely**, **Malia'Kekia Nicolini**, **Olga Khvan**, **Rene Dongo**, **Robert Davis Awkward**, **Victoria Lynn Awkward**, and **Yuko Okabe**.

Upon completion, cohort members join the **ACOM Alumni Network**, featuring special convenings, member events, and further opportunities for professional growth. Cohort members are invited to participate through a nomination by **ACOM Alumni Network** members.

To date, 58 participants from 32 cultural institutions have participated in **ACOM's** 2023 cohort and a pilot in 2021 that was sponsored in collaboration with the [Initiative to Advance Racial Equity at Harvard Business School](#) and co-led by HBS Professors Rohit Deshpande and Henry McGee. Learn about previous ACOM participants at [AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/ACOM](https://AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/ACOM).

"I'm beyond thrilled to have brought together this extraordinary group of artists, administrators, and community builders from across Massachusetts and beyond to strengthen the Commonwealth's arts ecosystem," said Dayron J. Miles, A.R.T. Associate Artistic Director. "As we designed our future home in Allston, we held **ACOM** and programs like it at the center of our conversations about creating intentional space to center community and share the resources of Harvard."

## **ABOUT THE 2024 ACOM COHORT**

**afrikah selah** (they/them) is a Boston-based cultural worker specializing in dramaturgy, new work development, and arts journalism. With a passion for dialogue and a desire to explore new ideas in innovative ways, they value creative collaboration that strives to build community towards a more equitable world. Currently they are the NNPN New Work Producer in Residence at Company One Theatre and 2023-24 TCG Rising Leader of Color, where they are striving to make change. [itsafrikah.com](https://itsafrikah.com)

**Celina Fernando** (she/hers) is a youth worker and educator based in Boston, MA. Her work with young people in Malden and Boston's Chinatown has been grounded in long-term spatial justice and youth-led, creative place-keeping efforts. She is passionate about building immigrant and working-class power, designing for social change, and celebrating the power and capability of youth.

**Desiré Graham** is an Artist In-Practice. She is a performer, director, and arts administrator. She sings to connect to a past that is hers and a history of many. She writes to reconcile the shade and the sun. She collaborates, in a constant search for those who also feel the tug to be elsewhere. From 2019 to 2022, she was based in Tuscany, Italy, as a company member at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. Currently based in the US, Graham commits to the cultivation of artistic spaces that foster transparency, active listening, and anti-oppressive practices as a requirement. In alignment with these values, she curates residency spaces such as The Black Residency and On the Table. Additionally, Desiré works with Double Edge Theatre, VLA Dance, and Wender Collective as a recurring artistic collaborator. Graham also hosts a workshop series entitled *Somewhere in Between*, an invitation for BIPOC and ALAANA peoples to discover the use of communal singing, give weight to their vibrational soul, activate, and call on others to join in. She is freely in-process; if you have any questions about what she's done or where she's been, please ask about it to be about it.

**Dorian Block** (he/him/his) is a trans-masculine performing arts leader of Hispanic and Native American heritage. He grew up attending, performing in, and eventually marketing for The Santa Fe Opera, contributing to multiple publications including the 2017 Season program book and the Grammy Award-winning *The Revolution of Steve Jobs* CD booklet. Dorian defined the role of Digital Marketing and Social Media Manager at The Dallas Opera, serving two seasons and strategically planning content through 2023. He sits on the Alumni Board of Directors for McMurry University, where he holds a BA in English and Arts Administration. Dorian is a member of the fifth SphinxLEAD cohort for Black and Latinx Arts Administrators, the 2022–2023 OPERA America Mentorship Program for Opera Leaders of Color, and serves on the *Opera Canada* Board of Directors. He recently co-founded a directory of gender-diverse operatic professionals at [OperaMODO](#). Dorian is dedicated to increasing representation of intersectional diversity on both sides of the operatic stage.

**Jaime Sharp** (she/they) is a Black queer nonprofit leader, social impact strategist, and arts and culture innovator residing on the stolen territory of the Three Fires People and members of the Kickapoo, Peoria, and Myaamia tribes. She is the Program Manager for Grantmakers in the Arts, a national association for arts and culture funders. Jaime is on the steering committee for the LGBTQ+ Network (OPERA America) and the Chicago Chapter of Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy. They also serve on associate boards for Chicago's Young Nonprofit Professional Network, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Symphony, and Chicago Philharmonic.

**Jeremy Whitehead** was born in Roxbury, MA. Jeremy found an interest in drawing at an early age and eventually got a scholarship to Mass College of Art at age 11. He started his first job at Boston University at 19 years of age, where he became a cook. During that time, Jeremy was interested in fine dining at first, but eventually lost interest. Now, he works in a retirement home and focuses on taking that same skill to create a great dining experience for the elderly residents. His experience working with the elderly has changed the way he sees life and death, it's also had an impact in how he looks at art and culture. Now, Jeremy is pursuing learning the arts and hopes to discover something new.

**Jessica Wong Camhi** is a Boston-based arts administrator with a focus on public art and collections management. Jess is currently the Interim Program Manager for Public Art at the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) and has previously worked at the City of Boston's Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture and the Chinese Historical Society of New England (CHSNE).

**Kandycce Whittingham** (she/they) is a queer first-generation Jamaican-American actor, director, teaching artist, and arts administrator. A recent graduate of Emerson College's Acting program, she currently works at Lyric Stage Boston as the Marketing and Development Associate and has freelanced as an actor with Central Square Theater, The Theater Offensive, Front Porch Arts Collective, Actors' Shakespeare Project, and Apollinaire Theatre Company. With a passion for collaborative and community-centered work, Kandycce believes that artistic storytelling, expression, and development is the cornerstone of equity and liberation for all.  
[kandyccewhittingham.com](http://kandyccewhittingham.com)

**Katiana Rodriguez** is a queer, Afro-Latinx artist born and raised in New York City. She currently works as a content administrator at American Public Television. Katiana received a BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Illustration, and her artistic influence can be seen throughout the city of Boston. Most notably, she was the featured artist for the Boston Celtic's Noche Latina poster. Additionally, she was a member of The Fenway's inaugural cohort, where she oversaw the planning of Violet Neighborhood, an art event centered around queer BIPOC creators. She has facilitated multiple workshops focused on art, identity, and portraiture with various groups, including students at Beaver Country Day School and Youth on Fire. As an artist of color, Katiana is focused on bringing diversity and awareness to visual art spaces through mural work, equity and inclusion initiatives, gallery curation, and event planning.

**Kelsey Fonise** (she/her) is a first-generation Haitian American actress, director, producer and writer. She is the founder of The Nou Collective, a digital community centered around amplifying the voices and stories of Haitians in theater, television, and film. As an actress and director she has won multiple Elliot Norton Awards for *BLKS* with Speakeasy Stage and *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* with The Huntington. She has produced across Boston and New York and recently had a debut of her pilot script at The Tank theater in Manhattan. Her next show will be at Feinstein's 54 Below this June in New York. [kelseyfonise.com](http://kelseyfonise.com)

**Kenny Mascary** (he/him), originally from Haiti, first arrived in Boston for college in 2004. Kenny then cut his teeth at mission-driven organizations like the West End House, Boys and Girls Club, Cambridge Youth Programs, the Cambridge Public Library, and more recently Now + There, before joining the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture as Chief of Staff. As a DJ, therapeutic mentor, film photographer, board-certified basketball referee, and plant dad, Kenny is passionate about connecting with communities and individuals that share a passion and excitement around conversations and experiences that open minds and help co-create spaces to celebrate the creative diversity of Boston's dynamic and ever-changing cultural fabric.

**Kira Troilo** (she/her) is a Boston-based creative, the CEO and founder of Art & Soul Consulting, and the creator and founder of Inclusive Stages®. A BFA graduate of Emerson College, Kira also holds an HR Essentials certificate. She was also recently awarded the distinguished Community Impact Award at SpeakEasy Stage Company's 2024 Gala. Kira's groundbreaking EDI work was recently featured in *American Theatre* magazine. Kira's consulting work to dozens of organizations has taken her across the country and abroad. In the summer of 2023, she provided tailored support for the world premiere of *Summer Stock: The Musical* at Goodspeed Opera House, starring Corbin Bleu. In the winter of 2024, she provided tailored support for *Something Rotten!* at Stratford Festival in Canada.

**Letta Neely**, originally from Indianapolis, IN, is Black lesbian parent, playwright, performer, poet, teacher, and activist. She is the story-weaver-in-residence at the Elma Lewis Center in the Social Justice Collaborative at Emerson College, a co-artistic director for Fort Point Theatre Channel, and co-director (along with Greg Allen) of the Revolution of Values Theatre Project. She is the Executive Director of Apprentice Learning. No matter where she's planted or is planting, all of her work is rooted in love and focused on liberation.

**Malia'Kekia Nicolini** ('o ia) is a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) teaching artist, internationally touring performer, choreographer, artistic director, speaker, and a gratitude enthusiast. Malia'Kekia is the Co-Founder of B4 The Other Creations, which travels throughout the US and internationally offering Pedagogy of Play. Malia'Kekia is the Northeast Lead Trainer for Narrative 4, teaching empathy through storytelling. 'O ia co-facilitated the Black and Indigenous Futures Convening with Howlround Theatre Commons and ArtsEmerson. As an interdisciplinary artist, 'o ia weaves all their experience together to empower dreams and create beauty. BFA in Music Theater, MBA in Mindfulness in Business Practices, BIPOC Leadership at ArtEquity. [b4theother.com](http://b4theother.com)

**Olga Khvan** is the Senior Manager of Public Relations and Content Marketing at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Prior to joining the MFA in 2016, she worked as an assistant editor and photographer covering arts and culture for *Boston* magazine. She graduated from Boston University, where she studied journalism and the history of art and architecture.

**Rene Dongo** is a Roslindale native who works as a media maker and teaching artist and has spent the past ten years in youth arts education. He strives to better understand the issues within his communities by facilitating and creating meaningful media. Currently, he works at ZUMIX as the Radio Station Manager where he supports community and youth-produced radio programming.

**Robert Davis Awkward** (he/him) is an arts worker who is relentlessly dedicated to creating space for artists to do their best work. He is a bilingual Black leader who has a deep investment in seeing individuals and teams succeed. Robert is currently Company Manager at ArtsEmerson, where he collaborates to produce mainstage

shows, film series, residencies, and other special projects. As Project Manager for ArtsEmerson's Black & Indigenous Initiative, Robert serves as program lead for the rollout of a multi-year leadership risk capital grant from the Barr Foundation. He also collaborated with peers from HowlRound Theatre Commons to put on a first-ever, in-person convening for Black and Indigenous leaders from around the country, and supported the commissioning of seven internationally recognized artists. Outside of the arts, Robert also leads media initiatives as a member of the Stewardship Circle of Black Men Run, Boston. With the support of his family and the BMR community, he ran his first Boston Marathon in 2024.

**Victoria Lynn Awkward** is a multi-hyphenate creator, administrator, educator, and the Director of VLA DANCE. Through her work she aims to inspire people to pause and reflect on their actions towards themselves, their community, and their environment. She pursued her multiple interests at Goucher College and graduated with high honors in Dance, Visual Art, and Secondary Education. Alongside directing VLA DANCE, Victoria is a freelance artist, who most recently choreographed for Huntington Theatre, Company One Theatre, Boston Lyric Opera, and Commonwealth Shakespeare. Victoria is also an educator, having worked at Salem State University, Brown University, West End House, Middlesex School, and Urbanity Dance. She continues to deepen her teaching practices as a mentee with Midday Movement Series. Victoria is currently a Brother Thomas Fellow and recipient of the Next Steps for Boston Grant Program, as well as a recipient of the Queer (Re)public Theater Offensive Residency.

**Yuko Okabe** is an illustrator and community artist. Select clients include: Big Cartel, Hester Street, City of Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, *The New York Times*, Agncy Design, The Experience Alchemists, Utile Architecture & Planning, American Ancestors by the New England Genealogical Society, Ciampa Creative, Mass MoCA, Punto Urban Art Museum, and Urbano Project. Select exhibits include: *Call and Response: Illustration in Uncertain Times*, Pao Arts Center; *Illustrators 64* (2022), *Illustrators 65* (2023), Society of Illustrators; *The End is Nigh* (2021), Light Grey Art Lab; *Pinpoint Boston* (2022), Institute of Contemporary Art; *Thirst 2021* (2021), Artists for Humanitarian Aid. Education: BFA in Illustration from Rhode Island School of Design.

## **ABOUT UBUNTU**

UBUNTU Research and Evaluation is an Afrofuturist strategic learning organization powered by a collective of unapologetic Black women, femmes, and non-binary people working as un-disciplinary strategists committed to resistance against anti-Blackness and the intellectual and political defense of all Black people, in solidarity with the global majority, through facilitation, organizational strategy, and evaluation. Our existence as an organization means that we antagonize an anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti-Queer, anti-Femme, and anti-Fat world.  
[ubunturesearch.com](http://ubunturesearch.com)

## **ABOUT THE BARR FOUNDATION**

The Barr Foundation's mission is to invest in human, natural, and creative potential, serving as thoughtful stewards and catalysts. Based in Boston, Barr focuses regionally, and selectively engages nationally, working in partnership with nonprofits, foundations, the public sector, and civic and business leaders to elevate the arts, advance solutions for climate change, and enable all students to thrive in high school and beyond. Barr's support for ACOM extends from its Arts & Creativity program, which invests in bold ideas and leaders to engage and inspire a dynamic, thriving Massachusetts. Founded in 1997, Barr now has assets over \$2.5 billion and has contributed more than \$1 billion to charitable causes. For more information, visit [barrfoundation.org](http://barrfoundation.org).

## **ABOUT AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER**



[The American Repertory Theater \(A.R.T.\)](#) at Harvard University is a leading force in the American theater, producing groundbreaking work that is driven by risk-taking and passionate inquiry. Terrie and Bradley Bloom Artistic Director Diane Paulus began her tenure in 2008 and co-leads the theater in partnership with Executive Director Kelvin Dinkins, Jr., who began his tenure in June 2022. A.R.T.'s mission is to expand the boundaries of theater, always including the audience as partner.

The A.R.T. focuses on the research and development of groundbreaking theatrical experiences, serving as a creative hub that has launched productions seen across the US and around the world. A.R.T. received the Tony Award for Best New Play for ***All the Way*** (2014); consecutive Tony Awards for Best Revival of a Musical for ***Pippin*** (2013) and ***The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*** (2012), both of which Paulus directed. A.R.T.'s Tony Award-winning and nominated productions include ***1776***; ***Jagged Little Pill***; ***Waitress***; ***Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812***; ***All the Way***; ***The Glass Menagerie***; ***Pippin***; ***Once***; ***The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess***. International productions include ***Waitress***, ***Nice Fish***, ***The Glass Menagerie*** (West End); ***Waitress***, ***Pippin*** (Japan); ***Jagged Little Pill***, ***Pippin*** (Australia); ***Sleep No More*** (China). ***Sleep No More*** currently runs in New York City.

Throughout its history, A.R.T. has been honored with many other distinguished awards including a Pulitzer Prize; a Jujamcyn Prize for outstanding contribution to the development of creative talent; the Regional Theatre Tony Award; and more than 100 Elliot Norton and IRNE Awards.

As the professional theater on the campus of Harvard University, A.R.T. plays a central role in the cognitive life of the University, catalyzing discourse, interdisciplinary collaboration, and creative exchange among a wide range of academic departments, institutions, students, and faculty members. A.R.T. is also engaged in a number of multi-year initiatives with partners at Harvard that explore some of the most pressing issues of our day.

A.R.T. is dedicated to making great theater accessible to all. It builds community with its audiences, artists, students, staff, and neighbors, actively engaging community members and local students annually in project-based partnerships, workshops, conversations with artists, and other enrichment activities both at the theater and across the Greater Boston area.

In 2024, A.R.T. will break ground on its new home, the David E. and Stacey L. Goel Center for Creativity & Performance. Designed by Haworth Tompkins, the new center will include two flexible performance venues, rehearsal studios, teaching spaces, a spacious public lobby, and an outdoor performance yard designed to host ticketed and free programming. Porous and welcoming intentional architecture will galvanize creativity and collaboration and fuel the mission. Learn more at [AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/a-new-home-in-allston](https://AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/a-new-home-in-allston).

# # #