

Georgia Council for the Arts
FY21 Project Grant Panel 1
April 29, 2020

Gylbert Coker (Thomasville) Gylbert Coker has a BFA in Fine Art from Pratt Institute, a MA in American Civilization from New York University, an MA in Art History from Hunter College, a Ph.D. in Art Administration from Florida State University, and two certificates, one in Program Evaluation and one in Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Coker has worked in the art business for more than 40 years. She has worked at the Guggenheim Museum as a clerical worker and the Museum of Modern Art as a cataloger in the Registrar's Department. She won a Rockefeller grant in Museum Education at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She was the first Chief Curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem. She was the Acting Director at the Children's Art Carnival, a private school of art in Harlem, New York. She worked as a freelance curator for many small community art centers both in New York and throughout the southeast. For example, she was the Visiting Curator at the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum in Eatonville, Florida. Coker was an adjunct art professor at South University of New Orleans for two years and a visiting art professor at FAMU. While at FAMU she set up and ran the new Visual Arts Gallery and brought in art by artists from throughout the United States along with showing faculty and student art.

Lisa Ellinger (Atlanta) is General Manager of the Atlanta Community Symphony Orchestra.

Laura Floyd (Athens) Laura Floyd is the Business Manager for Canopy Studio in Athens. She is a Certified Bookkeeper who has worked with a variety of businesses and nonprofit organizations in Athens over the past thirteen years. She has a background in music, visual art and theater and was a founding board member of ATHICA. She currently has paintings in local exhibitions and is a backdrop artist for Arts!Oglethorpe.

Ashlee Haze (Atlanta) Ashlee Haze is a poet and spoken word artist from Atlanta by way of Chicago. Earning the nickname "Big 30" because of her consistency in getting a perfect score, she is one of the most accomplished poets in the sport of poetry slam. She has been a part of the Atlanta Poetry circuit for over a decade and has been writing over 15 years. Ashlee Haze is a 3-time Queen of the South poetry Slam Champion, 2-time Women of the World Poetry Slam Finalist and 2-time National Poetry Slam semi-finalist. She recently appeared on NPR's Tiny Desk series alongside Blood Orange. Her sophomore book "Smoke" is scheduled for release Fall 2020.

Allison Newberry (Springfield) Allison has a history of music and dance performance through college. After college, she was a commercial editor and news director. She transitioned into marketing and promotions, most recently for a cable provider as Area Marketing Manager overseeing eleven markets across seven states. Her current responsibilities as Theatre Director of the Mars Theatre in Springfield include fundraising for the Friend of the Mars program, marketing and advertising, scheduling of all live acts and movies, overseeing all staffing and concession inventory management, maintaining the budget, and grant writing.

Brian Renko (Milledgeville) Brian Renko has been the Executive Director of Allied Arts since February 2016. A graduate of Mercer University, Renko has worked at Allied Arts in various positions for 20 years. During his time at Allied Arts, Brian has worked in every aspect of non-profit management.

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Ramatu Afegbua-Sabbatt (Atlanta) Ms. Afegbua-Sabbatt is a master dancer, professional instructor, musician, storyteller, businesswoman, and a member of the International Dance Council of Paris. She is the President/CEO of Manga Dance, an African dance company based in Atlanta.

Colt Chambers (Cave Spring) Colt Chambers was appointed by Governor Brian Kemp in August 2019 as a Council Member of the Georgia Council for the Arts. Since 2012, Chambers has served as President of the Board of the International Music and Entertainment Association, an advocacy organization for independent musicians and live entertainment professionals. He is a small business owner and currently serves on the board of the Calhoun Little Theatre, a division of the Harris Arts Center, and as an advisory committee member and reader for the National Endowment for the Arts' Challenge America grant program.

Connie Fritz (Moultrie) Connie Fritz brings over 35 years of nonprofit experience to the position of Executive Director of the Colquitt County Arts Center. She served on Arts Center staff as program manager during the initial renovation of the facility in 1989 and served as the Program and Marketing Director in the mid 90's for three years. Connie is the founder of the Arts Center Youth Theater program and has developed the program to the point it has been divided into three age groups to accommodate all students interested. As a volunteer of the Arts Center, Connie served as chair of the Festival on the Square for three years and has served as the Technical Director on several community projects through the Arts Center. Connie served as an instructor leading theater and art classes for over twenty years for children and adults.

Julian Plowden (Columbus) Julian Plowden is a Columbus resident who does Architectural photography and Photojournalism, blending them into romantic art pieces. Julian has captured images from events related to politics; Black Lives Matter; Ferguson, Missouri; and social tensions across the nation. His images have won awards, been featured in The Louvre, and been included in collections such as Emory University's MARBL archive. "I studied Architecture here in high school and majored in Architecture, Education and Media in college. That is why my style of photography often incorporates lines, angles, parallels and juxtapositions between buildings and people. I romanticize the buildings, which is why I coupled this show with love poetry." Julian accomplished his goal of becoming a "Best of Atlanta" photographer as part of the local news annual rankings and continues to work today.

Jan Shiff (St. Marys) Jan Shiff is the Treasurer/Operations Director for St. Marys Children's Theatre and Vice President and Operations Director for The Friese Studio of Music and Performing Arts. She has a Bachelor's of Business degree from Northern Illinois University and 25 years of experience in corporate operations and mergers and acquisitions.

David Tahere (Lookout Mountain) David Tahere is the Assistant Professor of Music at Covenant College. He holds a BM from Lee University and an MM from Temple University.

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Landrie Bock (Cairo) Landrie Bock is a teacher with the School of Fine Arts at Cairo High School. She was previously Managing Director for the Henegar Center for the Arts in Melbourne, Florida; Business Manager for the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival; General Manager for the Adirondack Theatre Festival in Glens Falls, New York; and Director of Business and Education at the WaterTower Theatre in Addison, Texas. She holds a BFA in Theatre from Valdosta State University.

Natalie Bradley (Oglethorpe) is an artist who runs Bradley Co. Handmade Goods. She is also the Downtown Development Authority Director in Oglethorpe, Georgia.

Joy Johnson (Marietta) Joy M Johnson is Executive Director of The Georgia Ballet. She is an experienced executive with a career foundation at IBM and progressively responsible leadership roles at NYNYX Business Center, Chubb corporation, Delta Airlines, and her own firm, GrowthMindset. She has held full P&L accountability in multiple organizations and made major contributions in strategic planning, operations, team collaboration and marketing. In the years directly preceding her tenure at The Georgia Ballet she was working with business leaders in both for profit and nonprofit companies to maximize bottom line results by focusing on such things as leadership skills, effective communication, productivity, training and facilitation, process and procedures, revenue growth and expense control. As the Executive Director of The Georgia Ballet, she leads the organization from a business perspective, creates a strategic vision, and builds the infrastructure to achieve the ballet's strategic goals.

Jay Markwalter (Augusta) Jay is the Executive Director at the Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus. He is also on the Board of the Greater Augusta Arts Council.

La Ruchala Murphy (Watkinsville) La Ruchala Murphy is the Executive Director of the Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation (OCAF). She comes to OCAF from the South Carolina Arts Commission in Columbia, South Carolina, where she served as a grants officer and county coordinator. With 16 years of experience in the arts sector, Murphy brings expertise in the areas of curatorial practices, museum administration, arts management and program development. A visual artist herself, Murphy is a graduate of Winthrop University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in studio art and a master's in arts administration. She also has a master of science in nonprofit administration from the University of Louisiana-Shreveport. Murphy is a certified nonprofit professional from the Alliance Management Institute Nonprofit Leadership Alliance and she attained candidacy for a doctorate in organizational leadership.

Jack W. Wagner (Atlanta) Jack W. Wagner, of Trumbull, CT, is a 2019 graduate of Furman University where he earned a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance. His piano instructors included Michelle Zinagle (New Haven, CT), Alina Rothenberg (Charlotte, NC), Marco Lazzeri (Arezzo, Italy), and Drs. Ruby Morgan and Derek Parsons (Greenville, SC). Although a classically trained solo pianist, he is most passionate about collaborating with other artists. While at Furman, he was a frequent pianist and music director of musical theatre performances, as well as an accompanist for chamber ensembles, choirs, and solo instrumentalists and vocalists. He continues to coach solo instrumentalists and vocalists throughout Atlanta.

