

# **Georgia Council for the Arts Arts Education Program Grant FY23 Grant Panelist Biographies**

## **Arts Education Program Grant - Panel 1**

### **Jenny Dell**

*Principal and CEO of J. Dell Group, Thomasville, GA*

Jenny holds a Public Relations degree from the University of Georgia, a Masters in Organizational Leadership from Brenau University, and a Certificate in Executive Leadership from Kennesaw State. With a nearly 20-year background in marketing, communications, graphic design, fundraising, and management, Jenny brings a unique and powerful set of complimentary experiences which lie at the intersection of creative and analytical. The majority of her career has been spent in the non-profit and education sectors, most recently leading advancement efforts at Southern Regional Technical College and Thomasville Center for the Arts.

### **Yema Thomas**

*Movement Artist and Arts Educator, Atlanta, GA*

Yema Thomas is a movement artist, cultural producer, educator, and an inaugural Lifted Voices Fellow with the Black Child Development Institute-Atlanta. An ardent interest in the intersections of literacy and the arts fuels her mission to empower the multi-valent identities of black youth through cultural education. Yema's passion for performance art led her to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History from Georgia State University, and she has since focused on promoting creative placemaking in her hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. She began her career in education working as a substitute teacher for the Atlanta Public School System nurturing her passion for mentoring and empowering youth in underserved communities, leading to an appointment as Georgia Early Education for Ready Students (GEEARS) Ambassador. She mentored youth in a bespoke contemporary African dance program of her own creation. Within the year of the program's existence, classes had more than tripled in size and had expanded to include children, adults, and lifelong learners. Since then, she has been performing locally and internationally under AfroHeat, her arts entertainment company.

### **Kathryn Banks**

*Development Director, Hambidge Center, Rabun Gap, GA*

Kathryn Banks currently serves as the Development Director at the Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences, situated in the mountains of north Georgia. Hambidge, founded in 1934, is a residency program that empowers talented individuals to explore, develop, and express their creative voices. Previously, Kathryn held development positions at Coxe Curry & Associates, Atlanta International School, the Foundation of Wesley Woods, The Center for Puppetry Arts, and Art Papers Magazine, a nonprofit and independent critical voice covering contemporary art and culture in the world today. Kathryn graduated from Georgia State University with a B.A. in art history. She is also a 2015 graduate of the High Potential Diverse Leaders program at the Georgia Center for Nonprofits.

**Matt Porter**

*Curator of Education, Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, GA*

Matt has a BFA in Illustration from the College for Creative Studies. He has worked at the Morris Museum of Art in a variety of positions in their Education department. He currently serves as Curator of Education. As Curator of Education Matt oversees a variety of programs, services, and staff related to educational and public programming at the museum. In his programming, special attention is paid to connecting to new audiences and continuing to promote diversity, integrity, and quality.

**Kimberly Epps**

*Center Director, Otis Redding Foundation, Macon, GA*

Kimberly Kelsey Epps has worked with the Otis Redding Foundation in various capacities over the past 6 years. From coaching to private instruction, programming to production, Kimberly now serves as the Center Director for the Otis Redding Center for the Arts. Over the past few years, she has worked to provide music and arts education in communities across Middle Georgia. Working to support and expand the various classes, workshops and summer camps provided by the Otis Redding Foundation, Kimberly has found a true passion for igniting creativity, critical thinking, and self-empowerment in our young people through the gifts of the arts. With a 30 year background in singing, songwriting and stage performance, Kimberly understands the important impact that music and the arts can have on young minds. As the Otis Redding Foundation breaks ground on a new, state of the art Otis Redding Center for the Arts, Kimberly is eager to expand the reach and impact of all the current and forthcoming programs.

**Laurel Crowe**

*Education Director, Georgia Ensemble Theatre, Atlanta, GA*

A graduate of the University of West Georgia, Laurel has served as the Education Director for Georgia Ensemble Theatre and Conservatory (GET), the Resident Professional Theatre Company at the Roswell Cultural Arts Center since 2011. She has the pleasure of both directing professional Theatre for Young Audiences productions (favorites include Ramona Quimby, James and the Giant Peach, The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, Junie B. Jones the Musical, and The Giver) and educational youth productions (Peter Pan, The Little Mermaid, Seussical the Musical, Shrek the Musical, Mary Poppins and more). As Education Director, Laurel is the primary administrator for the Conservatory at GET, develops curriculum for both theatre classes as well as residencies and Theatre for Young Audiences productions. She enjoys teaching voice, improvisation and scene study to all ages and is always looking for new levels of inspiration. Recently she was able to celebrate a new milestone for the Georgia Ensemble Theatre & Conservatory with the opening of the GET Studio.

**Arts Education Program Grant - Panel 2****Zerric Clinton**

*Artist and Art Educator, McDonough, GA*

Zerric Clinton received his BFA in Art Education from Valdosta State University, an M.A. in Educational Leadership, Valdosta State University, and a PhD in Art Education from Florida State University. Over the past 24 years he has received several award. His awards include 2015 GAEA Secondary Art Educator of the Year, 2004 and 2012 Most Influential Teacher of an Honor Student, Cairo High School, and he was elected the 2017 President of the Georgia Art Education Association.

**Samone Norsworthy**

*Teaching Artist, Midway, GA*

Samone T. Norsworthy was born in Savannah, Georgia. Her love for art began when she started taking art lessons at the age of ten through the City of Savannah Cultural Arts Division. Samone experiments with different styles and forms of art and draws inspiration for her art from various elements in nature. Samone is the owner of Samone Norsworthy Creative, a digital boutique.

**Emily Hofgreffe-Ribiero**

*Assistant Curator of Education, Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA*

Emily Hogrefe-Ribeiro is the assistant curator of education at the Georgia Museum of Art. In that role, she develops, implements, and evaluates a robust schedule of (200+) programs for K–12, youth, family, and community audiences each year. She works with teachers in Athens-Clarke County and surrounding areas to plan and schedule programs, and she develops teaching packets and interpretive gallery guides for K–12 tours. Emily is a PhD student in art education at the University of Georgia, and her research explores intersections of social justice curriculum and single-visit school tour programs for elementary school students. She holds a BA from Sarah Lawrence College and an MA in art history from Tulane University, focusing on contemporary art of the African diaspora. Prior to joining GMOA, she was a graduate fellow at the J. Paul Getty Museum and worked in art museums in New Orleans and Connecticut.

**Leigh Powell**

*Choral Director, Bainbridge High School, Bainbridge, GA*

Leigh Powell has been actively involved with the arts community in Bainbridge, GA for many years. She recently graduated from The University of Georgia with her Education Specialist (EdS) degree in Music Education in 2020, and graduated with her Master of Music Education (MME) from Florida State University in August 2016. She is currently the Choral Director, Guitar Teacher, and Drama Teacher at Bainbridge High School in Bainbridge, GA. During her teaching career, Leigh was named Teacher of the Year in 2015 and Outstanding Educator in 2016 at Jones-Wheat Elementary. At Bainbridge High School, she created the Theatre Arts program in 2017, the Guitar program in 2021, and has re-established the Choral program since her employment in 2017. She also developed the Southwest Georgia Honor Choir, previously known as the Tri-County Honor Choir, in which choral students from surrounding counties perform with a guest clinician. She sponsors the Drama Club, the One-Act Play troupe, GHSA Literary Team, Thespian Troupe 4897, and BHS Marching Band Danceline Auxiliary Team. She leads students to compete in regional and state literary and one-act play competitions, and also has students participate in Choral Large Group Performance Evaluation and All-State Chorus. In the community, she is a member of the Bainbridge Little Theatre Board of Directors and the active Recording Secretary. She is currently certified in Music K-12, English 6-12, and is Gifted endorsed for both Georgia and Florida. She has completed certifications in Orff Level 1, AP Music Theory, and is a Certified Ambassador Training with QuaverMusic of Nashville, TN. Leigh married her high school sweetheart and they have two children.

**Jeff Mather**

*Teaching Artist, Decatur, GA*

Jeff is a community-based public artist and multi-disciplinary teaching artist. He has conducted site sculpture residencies and directed public art projects all over Georgia. He is board president of the Atlanta Partnership for Arts in Learning (APAL). He is the STEAM Artist-in-Residence at Drew Charter School for 45 days each semester, where he co-teaches project-based learning units in K-12. His partnership work at Drew has been featured by GPB and Edutopia. Jeff was digital storytelling coach for

nine years at the South Atlanta School of Law and Social Justice and he has created digital storytelling programs for the Woodruff Art Center, for APAL, and at Drew Charter. He has directed experimental theater productions at the Center for Puppetry Arts and served as artist-in-residence for the Atlanta Symphony and the High Museum. Jeff has served as an artist-in-residence at over 150 schools.

### **T. Lang**

*Choreographer, Atlanta, GA*

T. Lang is dedicated to exposing the arts and emerging communities to the creative impact and genius of dance. Lang earned her Bachelors and Masters of Fine Arts in performance and choreography from the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) and New York University's Tisch School of the Arts respectively. In the early days of her career, Lang danced with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet and Marlies Yearby's Movin' Spirits Dance Theater. Lang relocated T. Lang Dance from New York City to Atlanta in 2008, continuing to develop, direct, and produce a high-impact blend of traditional and experimental contemporary movement. Arts America called Lang's choreography "powerfully thought-provoking," "masterfully blended," and "unsettling genius." Creative Loafing named T. Lang Atlanta's Best Choreographer in 2016 and Best Collaboration in 2015 for her work with visual artist Nick Cave. Lang's work has been commissioned by the High Museum of Art, Goat Farm Arts Center, Flux Projects and others. Lang stays engaged with the next generation of movement artists through her summer educational intensive, Sweatshop, and as an Associate Professor and founding Department Chair of Dance Performance and Choreography at Spelman College.

## **Arts Education Program Grant - Panel 3**

### **Lyrika Holmes**

*Harpist and co-founder of "Artz for the Harp," Austell, GA*

Lyrika Holmes is an internationally known harpist, singer, songwriter, composer, actress, teacher and co-founder of nonprofit arts school, "Artz for the Harp." A classically trained harpist from St. Louis, MO, Lyrika has brought the harp into a futuristic world of electronic beats combined with r & b, jazz, pop, and classical elements to create a style all her own. As a composer, and co-producer on many of her albums, her content is eclectic and unique. Lyrika also had the honor of touring throughout ASIA with the world-renowned company Cirque Du Soleil, as their Kooza Soul Singer. Prior to this, Lyrika has opened for several artists including: Kerri Hilson, Joe, Laura Izibor, and Phil Perry and has played alongside some of the best, including the Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin.

### **Dixie Hedrington**

*Founder and Executive Director, Friends & Stars, Inc., Ochlocknee, GA*

A professional artist, Dixie quickly found there were limited creative outlets for people with disabilities when looking for enriching activities for her son, who is deaf. With a desire to create change, she founded Friends & Stars, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to enhancing the well-being of special needs children and adults through inclusive arts programs. By providing individualized attention specific to each student's needs in an environment of acceptance, Dixie and her team help them discover their unique artistic expression. She also works with museums and public spaces to display her students' pieces. Through her efforts, participants gain confidence and pride, and many have gone on to pursue a career in the arts. Dixie's talent and passion for teaching demonstrates that limitations can be conquered when you are willing to try. She has been a Teaching Artist in Residence with VSA Florida and is on the Georgia Council for the Arts Teaching Artists Registry and Vibrant Communities Artist List.

**Randy Taylor**

*Teaching Artist, Atlanta, GA*

Randy Taylor has been working in the arts in Atlanta since the 70's. He has provided visual art as an illustrator, painter, and image maker. Randy served as a performer with CREATE Children's Theater in roles representing Vincent van Gogh, da Vinci, Calder and others. Taylor was the curator for education for the Museum of Design and has served as a teaching artist for Young Audiences, The High Museum of Art, The Carlos Museum, The Fox Theater, Georgia Council for the Arts, The Children's Museum of Atlanta, and Fulton County Arts Council. For ten years he was an instructor in Early Childhood Education at Georgia Piedmont Technical College. He is the enrichment coordinator for the City of Decatur Afterschool programs. Taylor has exhibited with 'Fine Arts 2020' Decatur Arts Festival, Juried Show; Automata: A Kinetic Art Show, The Irma Freman Center for Imagination, Pittsburgh and a solo show of 25 shadow memoir boxes – "Journey of a Queer Skinny Kid," Sycamore Gallery, Decatur; Taylor created a paper theater performance – "The Worm of Lambton," which combines illustration and theater, Alternative History Museum, DragonCon; Art of Nature, Blue Heron Nature Preserve, artists collaboration 2019 and 2020. More recently Taylor has been working with the Fulton County Schools Teaching Museums in creating traveling teaching trunks and advising on exhibitions.

**Pilar Lowden**

*Founder Hayiya Dance Theatre, Macon, GA*

G. Pilar Wilder Lowden founded both Hayiya Dance Theatre (20<sup>th</sup> Season) and Hayiya Dance Theatre, Inc. (25<sup>th</sup> Season) as a student at Wesleyan College. In 2017, she was selected by the International Association of Blacks in Dance and currently serves in the Next Generation Leadership Program as well as the inaugural COHI I MOVE cohort. Pilar is currently teaching dance at Hayiya Dance Theatre and Cutno Dance in Augusta, GA. She also teaches West African dance at Wesleyan College as an adjunct professor.

**Mandy Mitchell**

*Director of Education, Out Front Theatre, Atlanta, GA*

Mandy Mitchell is an energetic, creative and ardent teaching artist, director and performer.. Mandy holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Acting/Directing from The Ohio State University, where she focused on the creation of new works and integration of new media. She has worked with the RSC, The Abbey Theatre of Dublin, The SITI Group, The Alliance Theatre and The Center for Puppetry Arts. Mandy is passionate about sharing the craft of acting with the next generation of stars and has coached several students into Broadway and Regional professional productions, countless film and TV appearances as well as some of the most competitive collegiate programs in the country. Mandy is a Kramer grant winner and also holds TOPS awards for excellence in teaching.

**Scott Wood**

*Treasurer, Southern Highland Music Foundation, Clayton, GA*

E. Scott Wood supports the Southern Highland Music Foundation (SHMF), a 501(C)(3) organization dedicated to preserving and providing instruction in the music traditions of the Piedmont and Southern Appalachian mountain regions. He currently serves as the organization's treasurer. For 25 years Wood served as the President of Milestone Marketing, Inc. an Atlanta-based, full-service business-to-business marketing communications firm supporting high technology clients. The company's client list included General Dynamics' SATCOM Technologies, MI Technologies, Paradise Datacom, Crystal Computers, Suniva, Inc. and AMTA, the Antenna Measurement Techniques Association. Wood holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature from California State University, Fullerton and a Juris Doctorate (JD) degree from Loyola Marymount University's School of Law in Los Angeles. He is a member of the

California Bar Association. As a member of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) for more than 20 years, Wood attained the Accredited Public Relations (APR) designation.