



NEWS RELEASE

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COCA ANNOUNCES NEW SENIOR AND ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP

Daron Hendrix and Kara Wurtz join Senior Leadership Team, and Shawna Flanigan and Dr. Phillip A. Woodmore join the Artistic Team

ST. LOUIS (June 1, 2023)—[COCA](#) - Center of Creative Arts, the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the U.S. and a leader in innovative arts education, announced Daron Hendrix as Senior Director of Development and Kara Wurtz as Senior Director of Finance, adding to COCA's Leadership Team led by President & CEO, Indigo K. Sams. In addition, COCA has also named key leaders to the Artistic Team announcing Shawna Flanigan as Artistic Director of Theatre and Dr. Phillip A. Woodmore as Artistic Director of Voice. Hendrix and Wurtz will report to Sams, while Flanigan and Woodmore will report to Senior Director of Arts Programming, Orlando Graves Bolaños.

"Daron, Kara, Shawna and Phillip all bring a tremendous amount of expertise to COCA. All are proven leaders in their field and are mission-driven arts advocates," said Sams. "I am honored to welcome them all to the COCA team to further advance arts education in our community and beyond."

Hendrix brings several years of nonprofit experience in donor cultivation, fundraising events, team building, board development and community engagement. Having most recently served as Greater St. Louis Development Director for The Salvation Army-Midland Division, she has met fundraising goals with innovative and community-centric approaches. Hendrix earned a master's degree in Nonprofit Management from Fontbonne University and completed Focus St. Louis' Women in Leadership program.

"I am honored to return to COCA in this new era for the organization and want to build on the amazing success achieved in its previous 37 years and recent capital campaign. I look forward to working under Indigo's leadership and alongside the phenomenal COCA team to further expand COCA's mission to 'enrich lives and build community through the arts.'"

Previously serving as Director of FP&A at Clayco, Wurtz has extensive experience working in finance across several industries, including telecommunication, construction and government, and earned a BSBA and MBA from Creighton University. She brings to COCA her expertise in budgeting and forecasting, analytics, dashboard and metric creation, financial reporting,

payroll, employee benefits, compliance, long term strategic planning and community development.

"I am thrilled to be a part of an organization that cultivates arts education in the St. Louis community," said Wurtz. "I am excited to help COCA advance its mission in such an exciting time in its history."

Flanigan brings more than 20 years of theatre experience to her new role. Having joined COCA in 2001 and most recently serving as the Director of Arts Education, she previously led the COCA Theatre Company, including presenting, producing or directing more than 70 shows. She has extensive experience as a producer, director, assistant director and dramaturg at theatres across the country, including Steppenwolf, Arena Stage, Intiman Theatre, A Contemporary Theatre, The Group Theatre and Goodman Theatre. Shawna earned a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Studies from Knox College and Master of Fine Arts in Directing from DePaul University. She has served as adjunct faculty at DePaul University and Barat College. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at East Central College.

"I have felt so fortunate to work at COCA, which has long been a place that trained and inspired young people who have grown up to become professional artists, arts leaders, arts supporters, participants and engaged audiences across a range of arts disciplines and fields, Flanigan said. "I look forward to collaborating with my tremendously talented colleagues to further develop artistic programming that centers on students."

Dr. Woodmore has been an active member of the St. Louis music community for many years. He spent 14 years in the classroom teaching middle school choir in the St. Louis area. He is a vocal coach to many students in St. Louis, Los Angeles, Phoenix and New York. In August 2016, he was asked to compose an original score of a version of *Antigone*, translated by Bryan Doerries, called *Antigone in Ferguson*, which has been traveling the country. Dr. Woodmore earned a bachelor's degree in Business Marketing and Music, with a concentration in Vocal Performance, from Saint Louis University; a master's degree in Music Education from Webster University; and PhD in Music Education from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

"I couldn't be happier to have this full circle moment, returning to my home, COCA, after this six-year exploration across the country. I am excited to implement best practices that I have learned on my journey. Upward and onward! Can't wait for what's ahead," said Dr. Woodmore.

COCA is excited to round out the Senior Leadership and Artistic teams with these talented individuals. In every area, we will ensure that all St. Louisans can flourish through meaningful arts experiences and that COCA will continue to serve as a creative home and community connector for all.

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ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves more than 50,000 students, audience members, artists, and families from more than 200 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of more than 200 artists at the heart of their work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and on-site at its campus in University City.