



THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY THEATER BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Length of terms - 3 years

Chris Ajemian, Trustee

Founder & CEO at CATES Tutoring
Joined in 2009

Chris Ajemian parlayed his writing and directing career into CATES, a global advising, education, and innovation firm based in New York and London. A member of both the National and International Associations of College Admissions Counselors, Chris holds a Bachelor of Arts in Pre-Med and Theater Arts from Boston College, where he received the J. Paul Marcoux Award for Academic & Artistic Excellence; his Ed.M. in Technology, Innovation, and Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and his MBA from The Wharton School of Business.

Jimmy Van Bramer, Vice President

Former District 26 Council Member
Chief Growth & Strategic Partnerships Officer of Girl Scouts of Greater New York
Joined in 2023

With a background in public policy and community organizing, Jimmy Van Bramer has dedicated his career to advocating for progressive change and amplifying the voices of underrepresented communities. As a former New York City Council Member representing the 26th District, Jimmy played a pivotal role in shaping legislation and initiatives aimed at promoting social justice, affordable housing, LGBTQ+ rights, and cultural diversity.

Diane Eisenstat, President

Professor
Joined in 2013

Diane Eisenstat has over twenty years of experience with digital packaging and delivery of global financial data, information and news. As Vice President of Product Management at McGraw Hill Financial she increased revenues over \$100M by developing new strategies to package and price content and devising methodologies to protect intellectual property. She is President of the Board of The Chocolate Factory Theater, and Assistant Treasurer of Town & Village Synagogue in Manhattan.

Daniel Fish, Trustee

Independent Artist

Joined in 2021

Daniel Fish is a New York-based director who makes work across the boundaries of theater, film, and opera. He draws on a broad range of forms and subject matter including plays, film scripts, contemporary fiction, essays and found audio. His 2019 production of OKLAHOMA! transferred to Broadway from St. Ann's Warehouse and won the Tony Award for Best Musical Revival.

Vallejo Gantner, Trustee

PS21 Center for Contemporary Performance
Joined in 2018

Vallejo Gantner is the Artistic & Executive Director at PS21 and has 25+ years of experience leading innovative arts organizations in the US, Australia, and Ireland. As Artistic Director of Performance Space 122 from 2005-2017, Executive and Artistic Director of Onassis Foundation USA, Curatorial Advisor for BAM, and beyond, he has championed a diverse array of artists, experimental works, and cutting-edge ideas throughout his career. A consistent emphasis in his curatorial practice has been the creation of new and unexpected experiences across artforms for curious audiences.

Neil Greenberg, Secretary

Independent Artist and Professor, Program Director, and Departmental Faculty Advisor for Contemporary Dance at The New School - Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts
Joined in 2022

Neil Greenberg came to New York from Minnesota in 1976 and danced with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from 1979-1986. He is known especially for his "Not-About-AIDS-Dance," which employs his signature use of projected words as a layering strategy that provides doors into "meanings" in the dance, while also raising questions about the nature of meaning-making. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and two Bessie Awards, repeated fellowships from the NEA and NYFA, a fellowship from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, a NDP Production grant, a Doris Duke Creative Exploration Award, and repeated support from the MAP Fund and NYSCA.

Nile Harris, Trustee

Independent Artist
Joined in 2025

Nile Harris is a performer and director of live works of art. Through performance, Harris creates immersive experiences that use the body on stage to manipulate one's relationship to time and self perception. Core to his practice is an interrogation of cultural histories and narratives that construct and enforce systems of power. Harris often employs improvisation, embracing its inherent relationship to failure, as a critical strategy of temporal transformation inside the apparatus of the theater. His recent work include 'this house is not a home' at Abrons Arts Center, 'minor b' at The Shed,

and 'Temporary Boyfriend' with Malcolm-x Betts at the Chocolate Factory Theater. His work has been reviewed and written about in the NYTimes, Brooklyn Rail, Interview Magazine, the New Yorker, and the Whitney Review. His practice has been supported with grants, awards, and residencies from Foundation for Contemporary Art, Franklin Furnace, MAP Fund, the Watermill Center, amongst others. He is currently an Artistic Associate at the Wooster Group, co-directing a new production with Kate Valk and is an Interim Artistic Leader with Ping Chong and Company (PCC).

Nunally Kersh, *Trustee*

Senior Producer, Live Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Joined in 2025

Nunally Kersh is a seasoned curator, producer, and arts advocate with a long track record of commissioning, developing and presenting both visual and performance-based work across a broad range of genres and settings throughout her career. Currently, she serves as Senior Producer for Live Arts at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, where she oversees the artistic planning and production of site-specific performances that engage in dialogue with the Museum's permanent collection and special exhibitions, including at The Cloisters. Recent projects have spanned music, dance, opera, and multimedia performance, and have featured such artists as Hamed Sinno (Westerly Breath), The Clarion Choir (Ockeghem Marathon), and Jacolby Satterwhite, whose work included a six-channel video installation and accompanying performance series.

Girolamo "Jerry" LaSpisa, *Trustee*

V.P. Commercial Banking at M&T Bank
Joined in 2022

Jerry LaSpisa is a Vice President, Branch Manager for M&T Bank's Business Banking Center located in the rapidly growing areas of Long Island City, Queens. He has been an active community member since the office broke ground back in 2007. He supports organizations such as the Long Island City Partnership, Queens Chamber of Commerce, Queens Economic Development Corporation, and the Sunnyside Chamber to name a few.

Diana Manalang, *Trustee*

Owner of Little Chef Little Cafe
Joined in 2022

Hospitality industry veteran Diana Manalang brings more than a decade of experience to her two Long Island City businesses, Little Chef Little Kitchen and Little Chef Little Café. Building on expertise developed in marketing for brands like Swarovski and restaurant management, Diana brings a passion for food and customer care to everything she does.

Brian Rogers, *Trustee*

Co-founder & Artistic Director The Chocolate Factory Theater
Joined in 1999

Brian Rogers a director, video and sound artist, co-founder and artistic director of The Chocolate Factory Theater, which supports the creation of theater, dance, music and multimedia performances at its post-industrial facility in LIC, Queens. Since 1997, Brian has conceived and/or directed numerous large scale films and performances at The Chocolate Factory and elsewhere including Small Songs (2023/2024), Screamers (2018), Hot Box (September 2012, co-presented with FIAF's Crossing The Line Festival / PS122's COIL Festival / EMPAC Center, Troy NY - supported by a MAP Fund grant), and the Bessie-nominated Selective Memory (July 2010).

Benjamin "Ben" Stark, *Trustee*

Clinical Psychologist & Owner, Private Practice
Joined in 2025

Benjamin Stark is a Clinical Psychologist working in private practice in Brooklyn NY. He studied psychology at the CUNY Grad Center & City College of New York and completed his postdoctoral fellowship at the Pratt Institute Counseling Center where he was a therapist for undergrad and graduate students studying art. This was by design. Before pursuing his PhD, he worked for nearly a decade in the entertainment industry, first as a film editor and then as a development executive, creating scripted and unscripted series and films. While covering theater in NYC for his development job, Ben fell in love with downtown, avantgarde productions, discovering a world that challenged his understanding of what theater, dance and performance could be. His favorite moments in a theater tend to be when he feels terribly uncomfortable, confused, sad, annoyed and out of his depth. In his practice, Ben works with a number of artists of various stripes and age, from a psychoanalytic orientation.

Frank Wu, *Treasurer*

Technology
Joined in 2022

Frank Wu has lived in NYC the past decade. Prior, he lived in Boston and Chicago, and usually says he's from California where he went to school, although he also grew up in the MidWest. He strongly feels NYC is the best City, and is also a busy single parent, learning muay thai, and has worked in the enterprise software industry for twenty years, currently at Red Hat.

Moe Yousuf, *Trustee*

President at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council
Joined in 2023

Moe Yousuf is the President at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC), a leading arts and cultural organization that builds public / private partnerships and provides artists with funding through regranting, residencies, and opportunities for presentation / engagement throughout Manhattan and at the newly renovated Arts Center at Governors Island. Moe has 15 years of experience in arts and culture leadership, strategy, fundraising, community engagement, and operations and has worked with BRIC Arts Media, Abrons Arts Center / Henry Street Settlement, The Billie Holiday Theatre, Newark Arts Council, Target Margin Theater, SPACE on Ryder Farm, The Foundry Theatre, and Signature Theatre.