



Chicago's Harris Theater for Music and Dance Names Peter M. Ellis Board of Trustees Chair

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The **Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance** announced today the appointment of **Peter M. Ellis**, Partner and Global Chair of Litigation & Senior Management Team member at **Reed Smith LLP**, as Chair of its Board of Trustees. Newly appointed to the Harris Board are Executive and Artistic Director of the Chicago-based D-Composed **Kori Coleman**, as well as PNC Bank Senior Vice President and Group Sales Executive **Sherry Jursa**. In addition, the Harris has elected **Claire O'Grady** and **Nancy Santi** to serve as Vice Chairs of the Board of Trustees, and **Daryn Alexis** as Vice Chair of the Harris Theater Associate Board.

Peter M. Ellis has been an active member of the Harris Theater Board since 2009, serving as Secretary, Nominating and Governance Chair, and Executive Vice Chair. He succeeds outgoing Chair **Merrilyn J. Kosier** as of July 1, 2024. "I'm grateful to Merrilyn for her tremendous leadership of the Harris Theater for the past two years," Ellis said. "The Harris Theater is at the center of Chicago's vibrant artistic community and I look forward to continuing to develop and showcase the phenomenal talent and productions we bring to the city, the country and the world. And I'm pleased to welcome Kori and Sherry to the Board. They are proven leaders and lovers of the arts. Adding them to our board of trustees will bring significant and instant positive impact to the Harris Theater. There's much to look forward to."

Kosier reflects, "It has been my distinct honor to lead the Harris Theater, Chicago's spectacular home for music and dance through a time of thoughtful re-emergence from the pandemic, vibrant celebration of its twenty-year legacy, and strategic planning for the future. I now hand the reins over to Peter Ellis. As our new Chair, I am confident his vision and ingenuity will have a meaningful impact on the important work and mission at the Harris."

Ellis played a key role in the success of the Harris Theater's recent 20th anniversary celebration, alongside fellow Event Co-Chairs **Merrilyn J. Kosier** and **Claire O'Grady**, which raised more than \$1.3 million for the theater. In a moving tribute during his remarks at the event, he related the impact the Harris has had on his own children's growth as young artists: "I am convinced that their experience in the Theater has not only made them appreciate the arts, but it also has encouraged them to identify ways to actively participate in the arts and engage in making our community and city of Chicago a better place."

Receiving his undergrad degree from the University of Michigan and his law degree from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, Ellis manages Reed Smith's disputes lawyers in the U.S., Europe, Middle East, and Asia, and serves on the firm's Senior Management Team and Executive Committee, the firm's global governing board.

In addition to his role at the Harris Theater, Ellis is active in the community as a Trustee at Rush University Medical Center, and the Board of the Children's First Fund (The Chicago Public Schools

Foundation). Additionally, Ellis is a 2017 Chicago United Business Leaders of Color honoree and a graduate Fellow of Leadership Greater Chicago (2007), and served as a gubernatorial appointee as the Chair of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. He is also an active member of the Economic Club of Chicago.

Peter Ellis lives in Chicago with his wife Shana and their three children, who are all regular and enthusiastic audience members at the Harris.

“As we enter our 21st season at the Harris, there is no more fitting or inspiring civic leader to take the helm of our Board of Trustees than Peter Ellis,” said **Lori Dimun**, the Harris Theater’s Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols President and Chief Executive Officer. “His dedication to the theater through his leadership of numerous committees over the years, his global business acumen, his commitment to our community, and his passion as an audience member aptly align with the theater’s mission and have primed him for this role. Peter and I aim to continue cultivating and recruiting dynamic board talent, like our newest additions, Sherry and Kori, who bring both unique professional talents and enthusiasm for the diversity of programming presented on our stage.”

Kori Coleman is a Chicago-based arts executive, creative strategist, and entrepreneur who has built a career by leveraging the power of creativity and storytelling to encourage Black people to take up space in any place. Coleman, who previously served on the Harris Theater’s Associate Board, founded D-Composed, a Black chamber music collective and non-profit organization. D-Composed is committed to uplifting and empowering society by providing a platform for the music of Black composers, and will be making its Harris Theater debut this Fall 2024.

A proud alumna of Spelman College, where she earned a degree in Philosophy, Kori is also a member of Chicago Philharmonic's Auxiliary Board and The Joffrey Ballet’s Gen J. Kori currently serves as the Program Coordinator for New Music USA’s, New Music Inc program connecting artist led organizations with the training and resources they need to thrive. In 2023 she was recognized as an emerging leader and selected to be in the inaugural cohort of 100 changemakers across the United States for The Obama Foundation's Obama Leaders USA.

Sherry Jursa is Senior Vice President and Group Sales Executive for PNC Business Banking for the Midwest Territory. With almost two decades of experience in financial services, Sherry helps lead a team which delivers advisory and banking services for small and medium-size businesses with revenues of over \$1M. Since 2018, Sherry has been a committed mentor to young professionals and diverse candidates, participating in internal initiatives to help advance their career development at PNC.

Jursa is an active leader in supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in the marketplace. She currently co-chairs the PNC regional Diversity and Inclusion Council and has had an active role in advancing PNC Employee Business Resource Groups (EBRGs). She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from North Central College and a Master of Business Administration and Management from Northern Illinois University.

As a young child, Sherry became involved in ballet, eventually making her way to become a senior dancer, resident artist and instructor with the Salt Creek Ballet in DuPage County, one of the top pre-professional ballet schools in the country.

[PRESS PHOTOS](#)

About the Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance

The Harris Theater is Chicago's home for music and dance, connecting diverse audiences with artists from across the city, the nation, and the world. An anchor institution of Millennium Park and the first multi-use performance venue built in downtown Chicago since 1929, the Harris was established in 2003 to create a much-needed home for the city's vibrant community of midsize performing arts organizations. Today, the nonprofit Harris Theater features some of the most diverse arts and culture offerings in the city, from its Chicago-based Resident Companies to the world-renowned visiting artists who perform on its stage through the *Harris Theater Presents* series.

The Harris represents a distinctive model for artistic excellence, collaboration, and creative symbiosis, making the performing arts relevant and accessible to the widest possible audience. Acting as both a home base for and a supportive partner of its Resident Companies, the Harris provides state-of-the-art performance space and ongoing support to nearly 30 Chicago-based performing arts organizations. Its 1,500-seat multi-use theater brings innovative and boundary-pushing productions from more than 32 countries across six continents to Chicago, creating unique opportunities for dialogue between Chicagoans and the world's leading artists, thinkers, and innovators. The organization's signature *Harris Theater Presents* series has featured acclaimed artists and ensembles including Joyce DiDonato, Batsheva Dance, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, English National Ballet, Joshua Bell, Monteverdi Choir, Angélique Kidjo, and Paris Opéra Ballet. The Theater's education and community engagement initiatives build bridges between artists and community members, providing master classes, artist talks, and free tickets for more than 35 partner organizations throughout Chicago.

To learn more about the Harris Theater, Chicago's home for music and dance in Millennium Park, visit harristheaterchicago.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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