
PRESS RELEASE



The Flynn Announces New Executive Director, Jay Wahl

BURLINGTON, VT — **Jay Wahl, producing artistic director at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, has been hired as executive director of the Flynn.** He succeeds Interim Executive Director Charlie Smith, who began in January 2020.

Wahl joins the Flynn after 11 years at the Kimmel Center, an inclusive organization that engages the Philadelphia region's diverse communities through performance and education. Wahl served as an international liaison and advocate for the Kimmel Center and the Philadelphia arts community, programming and producing a wide range of performances, and spearheading efforts to bring diverse and inspiring artists to the city. In particular, Wahl is an expert in commissioning and facilitating works in public spaces, using unconventional platforms as a means of challenging the hierarchies, assumptions, and biases of traditional arts organizations. He was also artistic director of citywide biennial event the Philadelphia Festival of the Arts (2011, 2013, 2016, 2018), which increased and broadened access to the arts by bringing performances directly to neighborhoods across the city. To support this work, Wahl helped to grow and steward funding sources, including from the European Commission, the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Mid-Atlantic Foundation, and the Wyncote Foundation, raising funds in excess of \$1 million.

Through his work in Philadelphia, Wahl created and led multiple residency programs in jazz and theater, resulting in numerous world premieres and providing incubator space for developing work with local and national artists. Wahl's skills in forging partnerships led to collaborations with local organizations such as Mural Arts Program, Mexican Cultural Center, Warrior Writers, Philadelphia Heritage Chorale, Actors Without Boundaries, and Philadelphia School of Circus Arts. At the national and international level, Wahl has collaborated with The Public Theater (New York), Lieux Publics (France), and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Washington, DC), and he has been a guest lecturer for both Temple University and The University of the Arts.

Wahl says, "I am so honored to join the team at the Flynn, an amazing group of big-hearted, courageous people. They strive to ensure the arts provide opportunities for each of us to discover what we can achieve by sharing our stories, learning creative skills, and imagining the future."

Prior to his role as producing artistic director, Wahl was the founding managing producer of the month-long, citywide festival Hidden City Philadelphia. In this venture, he worked with over 25 partners and nine venues to uncover the unknown stories of the city's cultural landmarks and neighborhoods. This project is an example of how Wahl has brought diverse groups together through the arts in order to build empathy across communities.

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“We are very excited to have Jay join us,” said Flynn Board Chair Staige Davis. “His experience, creativity, and innovative spirit will help us to thrive as we emerge from the pandemic to bring live performance back to our audiences.”

In recognition of the hiring, the Flynn Board is challenging our donor community to match an exceptionally generous \$275,000 contribution by the Miller Foundation. This campaign is intended to honor Burlington philanthropists Bobby and Holly Miller, and serve as a welcome to Wahl with a major show of community support. Donations will be used to support operations and creative innovation under Wahl's leadership over the coming year.

The Flynn has been at the center of Vermont's cultural landscape for 90 years, from its earliest days as a vaudeville house through five decades as a premier movie theater. Today, the Flynn is an acclaimed performing arts and education center, recognized internationally for its exceptional artistic, educational, and community outreach activities; its world-class presentations; and its sound fiscal management. The Flynn is committed to making a positive impact and providing a world-class experience through the transformative power of the performing arts to unify, strengthen, and inspire. The Flynn seeks to make the performing arts accessible to all through a commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and anti-racism.

The Flynn board retained Arts Consulting Group to lead the national search that brings Jay Wahl to the organization.

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For images and more information, visit the Flynn's online press room:

<https://www.flynnvt.org/press-room>.