

20 26 | OPERA CONFERENCE

WILMINGTON, DE MAY 12-15



Plenary 3: Advocate Like a Pro

Thursday, May 14, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Gold Ballroom, Hotel Du Pont

SPEAKERS

**20
26** | **OPERA
CONFERENCE**
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Amanda Fuchs Miller
Seventh Street Strategies



Jessica Ball
Delaware Division of the Arts



Melissa Hopkins
Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit
Advancement



Ramón Jones
The Recording Academy

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1. Build organizational capacity

- Advocacy lead named on staff
- Cross-department support identified
- Annual advocacy goals assigned
- No ambiguity about who is driving the work

2. Put advocacy on the board agenda

- Standing board agenda item
- Advocacy updates in committee meetings
- Trustees briefed on policy issues and talking points
- Board members activated for outreach and relationship-building

3. Put advocacy on the staff agenda

- Regular advocacy or policy updates in all-staff meetings
- Staff awareness of local/state/federal issues
- Shared language about why advocacy matters
- Cross-functional participation, not just leadership

4. Maintain an effective advocacy communications rhythm with the public

- Advocacy section in newsletters or community updates
- Action alerts when appropriate
- Clear, simple explanations of policy issues
- Messages tailored to different audiences

5. Build and maintain relationships with elected officials year-round

- Annual meetings with legislators or staff
- Invitations to performances, events, and education programs (keep in mind gift rules!)
- Personal follow-up after visits
- Relationship-building when no immediate ask is on the table

6. Coordinate locally with the arts ecosystem

- Regular meetings with local arts leaders
- Shared advocacy priorities where possible
- Coordinated visits to lawmakers
- Partnerships with service organizations, chambers, tourism, education, and civic groups

7. Train staff, board, and artists in advocacy

- Advocacy training in annual professional development
- Basic advocacy onboarding in HR orientation
- Trustee training on nonprofit advocacy rules and opportunities
- Artist-facing training on storytelling, testimony, and public engagement

8. Equip people with tools and scripts

- Resources can be found on our website
- Who-your-officials-are cheat sheet
- Email templates and meeting scripts
- Impact data and local stories in ready-to-use format
- Crisis-response protocols

9. Make advocacy visible in public-facing culture

- Elected officials invited to key events and promoted on media platforms
- Appropriate acknowledgement at public or VIP gatherings
- Public recognition of arts champions
- Visible civic engagement as part of the organization's identity

10. Measure advocacy activity and progress

- Annual advocacy plan
- Goals for meetings, trainings, outreach, and coalition activity
- Tracking legislator engagement
- Tracking advocacy participation by board/staff/artists
- Annual review of wins, gaps, and next steps

Advocacy Core Function Checklist

- ✓ Do we have a named staff lead for advocacy?
- ✓ Is advocacy a regular board agenda item?
- ✓ Is advocacy discussed in staff meetings?
- ✓ Do we communicate advocacy issues to constituents regularly?
- ✓ Do we meet with elected officials annually?

Advocacy Core Function Checklist (continued)

- ✓ Are elected officials invited into our organizational life?
- ✓ Do we coordinate with peer arts organizations locally?
- ✓ Do staff, trustees, and artists receive advocacy training?
- ✓ Do we have simple advocacy tools, scripts, and materials ready?
- ✓ Do we track advocacy activity and progress each year?