

**ANTHONY BYRNES**

T: 213.305.3132

E: [anthonybyrnes@mac.com](mailto:anthonybyrnes@mac.com)

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Colburn School  
200 South Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

## **RE: General Manager of Performances & Events Division**

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

In October 2004, eight miles southwest of Colburn, the Kirk Douglas Theatre opened on time and on budget to a fully subscribed first season. When we first went to Culver City in 1997, they 'rolled up the sidewalks at 6pm'—there were scarce dinner options within walking distance, and the Culver Theatre, which would become the Kirk Douglas, was home to hundreds of pigeons, not artists and audiences. Driving through Culver City today, it's hard to believe the transformation. This experience taught me the profound power of place-making: how creating a culture of place—a welcoming, vital venue—doesn't just transmit art but transforms the ecosystem and people that surround it. As the Colburn Center prepares to open in 2027, I would be honored to bring my experience and understanding to your once-in-a-generation project.

Opening a major new venue is rare. Building an entirely new Performances & Events Division from the ground up is rarer still. Having shepherded the Kirk Douglas Theatre through this full lifecycle—from architect selection through commissioning and producing the inaugural season—I recognize this role at the Colburn as the opportunity to apply everything I've learned to a project of even greater scale and impact.

What draws me to this role is the chance to return to the work I find most meaningful and challenging: building a team, welcoming an audience, and establishing the sustainable processes that allow a venue to thrive. There is a particular thrill in creating a culture of place—one that nurtures artists, supports students, employs skilled professionals, and makes a city feel at home in a new venue. I've experienced this transformation twice, and the prospect of doing it again at Colburn, with new performance venues and an expanded mission, is deeply compelling.

My experience with capital projects and cultural infrastructure speaks directly to this opportunity. Beyond the Kirk Douglas Theatre, I oversaw the \$450,000 renovation of CTG's Ivy Substation and designed/built the Shakespeare Center's 600-seat outdoor amphitheater—each time creating not just physical spaces but complete operational models and staff structures. More recently, as Interim Associate Dean at CSULB's College of the Arts, I've built institutional infrastructure at a different scale: comprehensive scheduling databases that optimize 945 unique spaces serving 4,600 students, through an integrated data architecture that unites previously siloed operations and reports. By nature, I am a systems thinker. All my work strives to support, and understand, the whole. I understand how disparate pieces fit together: how the ethos of the crew affects the comfort of the performers; how the attitude of the usher sets the stage for an audience to experience a work of art; how a simple schedule change can affect both revenue models and student success. Building sustainable infrastructure means creating systems that work not just individually but as a coherent whole, allowing institutions to grow without constantly reinventing the wheel.

I bring proven revenue generation across every stream you have identified in the job description. At Shakespeare Center, I transitioned the organization from a free theater model to earned revenue, achieving 20% year-over-year ticket growth while managing all ancillary revenue operations including concessions, merchandise, facility fees, and major sponsorships (which, along with a more strategic look at our patron data, grew an already successful annual gala by 100%). As producer/general

manager for *Louis & Keely: Live at the Sahara*, I generated \$1.4 million in revenue from a 135-seat venue—demonstrating that exceptional venue utilization and audience experience drive revenue. At both Kirk Douglas and Shakespeare Center, I managed front-of-house operations, rental negotiations, and the full spectrum of earned and contributed income that sustains mission-driven institutions.

Infrastructure is only as strong as the people who bring it to life. Throughout my career, I have taught artists, staff, and students across disciplines to understand what it means to be part of an ensemble. My belief in collaboration and creating as a group are guiding principles that inform everything I do—whether I'm working with a production crew, a board of directors, or a team of administrators.

At Kirk Douglas, I built and managed a staff of 50 from inception—hiring production crews, technical staff, and front-of-house teams, designing the operational culture that would define the venue. I combine pragmatic experience with a structural understanding of how a venue works: I am as comfortable talking to a stagehand as a major donor, and I appreciate how the efforts of one affect the other. At Shakespeare Center, I managed 40+ staff (6 full-time, 35+ seasonal) while creating the welcoming, professional environment that nurtured artists and audiences. As CSULB Theatre Arts Department Chair and now Interim Associate Dean, I've led teams through significant cultural transformation—removing gatekeeping practices, establishing transparent policies, and embedding equity principles throughout operations.

My 25 years in Los Angeles performing arts have been deeply collaborative across disciplines. As USC's Director of Cultural Relations, I served as liaison across all five arts schools, curating the *Experience LA!* programming that spanned music, dance, theater, visual arts, architecture, and cinema. In my current role as Associate Dean at CSULB's College of the Arts, I provide strategic oversight across six disciplines including Music and Dance. Whether understanding the distinct technical requirements of dance spaces, working with composers on theater productions, or facilitating cross-disciplinary collaboration, I've developed fluency across art forms while respecting their unique traditions and operational needs. My decade teaching at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA) reinforced my commitment to public arts education and the transformative power of conservatory training.

Which brings me to the often-overlooked idea that we should love where we work. All of us—staff, artists, administrators—entered this field because we are passionate about what we do. I believe it's essential that we find joy in our work and the people with whom we have the privilege to collaborate. While no general manager can remove all obstacles or solve every challenge, they can set a tone for the culture of the space and an appreciation for everyone who works, creates, and performs there because the culture we create behind the scenes directly shapes what audiences and artists experience. I bring to this work a sense of playful joy and gratitude for the opportunity to do what I love.

The chance to help build not just venues but community—to create a venue that welcomes the city and joins the vibrant cultural life of Grand Avenue and opens Colburn's world-class artistry to audiences on a grand scale—is what draws me to this once-in-a-generation opportunity. I am committed not only to personal excellence but also to creating sophisticated, sustainable structures that allow institutions to fulfill their promise and grow without constantly reinventing the wheel.

Should you find my materials compelling, I would be honored to have the opportunity to discuss my candidacy further. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Anthony Byrnes