

Memorandum



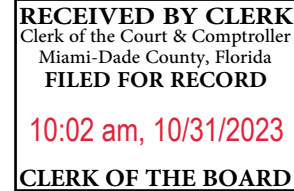
Date: October 31, 2023

To: Honorable Chairman Oliver G. Gilbert, III
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Daniella Levine Cava
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniella Levine Cava".

Subject: Mayoral Appointment – Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs



Pursuant to the authority vested in me under Section 2.02(C) of the Miami-Dade County Home Rule Charter, and with the concurrence of the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Council, I hereby appoint Marialaura Leslie to the position of Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs, effective immediately.

Marialaura is an arts administrator with more than three decades of experience in nonprofit arts management, cultural policy, and local arts agency operations. Prior to being promoted to Interim Director earlier this month and Deputy Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs in 2018, Marialaura held positions of increasing responsibility within the Department, including Chief of Strategic Initiatives, Chief of Information and Outreach, and Cultural Projects Administrator. During her tenure at the Department of Cultural Affairs, she has managed millions of dollars in grants programs, led technical assistance workshops, developed equity initiatives, created professional development opportunities for arts administrators of color, and oversaw the Department's communications strategies promoting cultural opportunities for artists and arts groups as well as their audiences.

Marialaura has also worked with major cultural institutions in Miami, New York and Puerto Rico, including Miami City Ballet, Coconut Grove Playhouse, City Theater, Jerry Herman Ring Theater at the University of Miami, Teatro del Sesenta, Balletteatro de Nana Hudo, Flushing Council on Cultural and the Arts at Flushing Town Hall and El Museo del Barrio on 5th Avenue in Manhattan. She holds a Master of Arts in Arts Administration from Goucher College and a Bachelor of Arts with double major in Theater Arts Management and Spanish from University of Miami. Her resume is attached for your reference.

I am confident in Marialaura's ability to lead the department with excellence and innovation. Please join me in congratulating Marialaura on her new role.

Attachment

- c: Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney
- Gerald Sanchez, First Assistant County Attorney
- Jess McCarty, Executive Assistant County Attorney
- Office of the Mayor Senior Staff
- Department Directors
- Jennifer Moon, Chief, Office of Policy and Budgetary Affairs
- Yinka Majekodunmi, Commission Auditor
- Basia Pruna, Director, Clerk of the Board

Professional Experience

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, Miami, FL

Interim Director

October 2, 2023 - Present

- Leads the strategies to achieve the Department's mission: to develop cultural excellence, diversity, and participation throughout Miami-Dade County by strategically creating and promoting equitable opportunities for diverse artists and cultural organizations, and residents and visitors, of all backgrounds and abilities, who are their audiences.
- Responsible for conceptualizing and implementing a comprehensive community cultural plan as an integral component of the County's overall mission and services. Responsible for a \$100 million local arts agency.
- Manages the work of Cultural Affairs Council, the Arts in Public Places Trust and the Tourist Development Council.

Deputy Director

2018- September 2023

- Supervises the Department's senior managers. Plans and directs the Department's operations and activities.
- Directs the Department's strategic business plan process, revenue development, grants writing and external affairs.

Chief of Strategic Initiatives

2014-2018

- Served as part of the senior management team involved in the Department's overall operations and activities.
- Responsible for strategic planning and performance management across all Department divisions (ASE and SMS).
- Liaison to elected officials, chamber of commerce, economic development agency, and convention and visitors bureau.
- Managed grants programs. Served as Public Information Officer (PIO).

MIAMI CITY BALLETT, Miami Beach, FL

2012-2013

Director of Development

- Worked with Executive Director and Board on the design, management and implementation of development efforts.
- Worked with Executive Director to identify private and public funding sources, including corporations, foundations, government, individual donors and through special events, such as the annual Gala.
- Increased Friends contributions by 22% over previous fiscal year.

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO, Manhattan, New York City

2011-2012

(NYC-owned Museum)

Director of Development

- Worked with Director and Board to fundraise from individual, government, foundations and corporate sources.
- Oversight of fundraising, board management, donor relations, galas and government affairs.
- Represent the Museum in the New York City annual budgeting process.
- Increased total contributions by 58% over previous fiscal year.
- Liaison to elected officials, NYC Councilmembers and the Office of the NYC Mayor.

FLUSHING COUNCIL ON CULTURE AND ARTS - FLUSHING TOWN HALL, Queens, NY

2010-2011

(NYC-owned Cultural Institution; Smithsonian Institute Affiliate)

Deputy Director

- Represented the Executive Director at staff, Board, government, community and donor meetings.
- Oversight of Board and donor relations, government affairs, finance, human resources, operations and capital projects.
- Worked with Director, Board and Department Directors to develop and implement strategic plans, policies and budgets.
- Increased New York City Council funding by 143% over previous fiscal year.
- Served as Queens Borough Leader for the Cultural Institutions Group.
- Liaison to elected officials, NYC Councilmembers and the Office of the NYC Mayor.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, Miami, FL

2005-2009

Chief of Information and Outreach

- Responsible for communications strategies and special projects.
- Liaison to elected officials, chamber of commerce, economic development agency, and convention and visitors bureau.
- Administered grants funding and technical assistance programs for cultural organizations and artists.
- Responsible for marketing initiatives for cultural tourism, facilities, audience development, and public art programs.

Cultural Projects Administrator

2001-2004

- Administered grants funding and technical assistance programs for cultural organizations and artists.
- Created the Miami Emerging Arts Leaders, a leadership development program now in its 19th year.

MDC002

MIAMI CITY BALLET, Miami Beach, FL Associate Director of Development · Managed corporate, foundation and government relations. · Responsible for donor cultivation / solicitation, grants writing and events management. Managed multiple annual giving societies in the South Florida tri-county area. · Coordinated several boards and committees of civic and business leaders.	1999-2001
COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE, Coconut Grove, FL (\$5m Regional Theatre) Development Manager	1996-99
THE JERRY HERMAN RING THEATRE, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL Assistant General Manager	1995-96
CITY THEATRE, Coral Gables, FL (Summer Shorts Theater Festival) Executive Coordinator	1996
ROMPEFORMAS: FESTIVAL DE BAILE Y PERFORMANCE, San Juan, PR (Dance/Performance Summer Festival) Production Coordinator	1992-94
BALLETEATRO INFANTIL DE NANA HUDO, San Juan, PR (Professional children's dance theatre company) School Manager / Production Assistant	1989-94

Education

Goucher College, Master of Arts in Arts Administration, 2013
University of Miami, BA, Double Major: Theatre Management and Spanish
Universidad de Puerto Rico, Theatre Arts and Communications

Language Skills

Fully bilingual: English; Spanish (written / spoken)

Professional Activities - Highlights

- **PRESENTER / SPEAKER:** National Cultural Equity Task Force / Americans for the Arts, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, National Arts Marketing Project Conference, Florida Alliance for Arts Education, Florida Association of Museums, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, Miami-Dade County International Trade Consortium, Arts and Business Council of Miami, and the Arts Extension Service - University of Massachusetts Amherst Winter Arts Management Institute.
- **GRANTS PANELIST:** National Endowment for the Arts, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, New York State Council on the Arts, State of Indiana, Arts Council of Indianapolis, Arts and Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg in North Carolina, Nebraska Arts Council, Florida Division of Arts and Culture, Queens Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Awards and Recognitions

- Knight Arts Champion Award, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, 2022
- Civic Arts Leadership Award, South Florida Theatre League Remy Award, 2020
- NACo Awards, National Association of Counties, multiple, 2007-2022
- Top 25 Most Powerful People in the Nonprofit Arts, 2008 (WESTAF)
- Special Recognition for National Leadership and Service, Americans for the Arts, 2007
- Miami Emerging Arts Leader Award, Arts and Business Council of Miami, 2005

Professional Affiliations

- Americans for the Arts
- Arts Action Fund
- National Association of Latino Arts and Culture
- Board Member, Florida Cultural Alliance
- Chair, South Florida Cultural Consortium
- United States Urban Arts Federation
- United Way Women United

Marialaura Leslie

Interim Director, Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs



Marialaura Leslie is an arts administrator with thirty years of experience in nonprofit arts management, cultural policy and local arts agency operations. She serves as Deputy Director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, a public arts agency dedicated to strengthening the work of arts organizations and artists in Miami-Dade County through grants and technical assistance; promoting arts education; making cultural activities more equitable and accessible for all residents and visitors; building new and improving existing cultural facilities; operating arts centers; managing public art projects and improving the visual quality of the County's built environment.

She joined the Department in 2001, moved to back to New York City for 4 years and returned to the Department in 2014. Prior to being promoted to Deputy Director in 2018, Marialaura held positions of increasing responsibility within the Department: Chief of Strategic Initiatives (2014-2018), Chief of Information and Outreach (2005-2009), and Cultural Projects Administrator (2001-2004). During her tenure at the Department of Cultural Affairs, she has managed millions of dollars in grants programs, led technical assistance workshops, developed equity initiatives, created professional development opportunities for arts administrators of color, and oversaw the Department's communications strategies promoting cultural opportunities for artists and arts groups as well as their audiences.

With a background in dance and theater, she administered the International Cultural Exchange Program, New Forms Grant for individual artists, Dance Miami Choreographers Fellowship Program, and the Community Grants Program, a quarterly competitive program that funded two hundred community-based and social service organizations each year. Marialaura has led several grants writing workshops for individual artists and cultural groups, created the Miami Emerging Arts Leaders and worked with the Creative Capital Foundation to produce the Creative Capital Miami Professional Development Program. In 2008, in response to an alarming lack of quality media arts coverage for Miami's cultural community, she worked closely with Director Michael Spring, to create and launch an independent, web-based media bureau generating insightful arts coverage in English and Spanish for print, broadcast and electronic media, with funding support from the Knight Foundation. Now known as ArtBurst Miami, this online platform continues to pay editors and arts journalists to generate features, previews and reviews that are made available for mainstream publication, free of charge.

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, she worked closely with Director Spring to successfully develop the Miami-Dade Arts Support (MAS) program in 2020, allocating 100% of the federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds approved for Miami-Dade County's arts community, representing more than \$10 million to cultural organizations, artists and artist-entrepreneurs. In 2021, Marialaura secured a \$500,000 federal grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to create the Miami Individual Artists (MIA) Program, providing funding to more than 200 artists, receiving a 2023 NACo Award for this innovative program.

Marialaura has worked with major cultural institutions in Miami, New York and Puerto Rico, including Miami City Ballet, Coconut Grove Playhouse, City Theater, Jerry Herman Ring Theater at the University of Miami, Miami Hispanic Ballet, International Ballet Festival of Miami, Queens Jazz Orchestra, Teatro del Sesenta, Balletteatro de Nana Hudo and Taller de Otra Cosa. She has worked with many renowned artists including Jimmy Buffett, Jerry Herman, Kathleen Turner, Carol Channing, Tony Randall, Jack Klugman, Eli Wallach, Theodore Bikel, and NEA Jazz Master Jimmy Heath. In NYC, she worked at El Museo del Barrio, a major Puerto Rican, Latino and Latin American museum on Fifth Avenue with a 572-seat theater.

Previously, Marialaura served as Deputy Director of Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts at the historic Flushing Town Hall, a Smithsonian Affiliate in Queens and a partner venue for Carnegie Hall's Neighborhood Concert Series with an art gallery and a 300-seat theater. Marialaura served as the Queens Borough Leader for the NYC Cultural Institutions Group Government Affairs Committee and as co-captain for the State of New York during National Arts Advocacy Day 2012 in Washington, D.C.

Marialaura was a founding member and Past Chair of the Americans for the Arts Emerging Leaders Council from 2002-2007. She was named among the Top 25 Powerful People in the Arts in America (Barry's Blog) and received the 2005 Emerging Arts Leader Award from the Arts & Business Council. In 2004, she served as a Member of the South Florida Cultural Board of the Puerto Rican Federal Affairs Administration. In 2020, she was honored by the South Florida Theatre League with the Remy Award for Civic Arts Leadership and she was recently recognized by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation as a 2022 Knight Arts Champion for playing a key role in cultivating Miami-Dade County's arts community.

A national arts leader, Marialaura has served on grants panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, New York State Council on the Arts, Arts Council of Indianapolis, Arts and Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg in North Carolina, Nebraska Arts Council, Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Queens Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, among others.

She has traveled with the Miami-Dade County International Trade Consortium and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce on business development missions to South America to promote Miami's cultural assets. Marialaura is a current member of Americans for the Arts, United States Urban Arts Federation, National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, the Arts Action Fund, the Cultural Tourism Committee of the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, and a former member of The Beacon Council's Creative Design Committee. She also serves as liaison to the Greater Miami Festival and Events Association and a board member of the Florida Cultural Alliance and the Frost Science Museum. Marialaura was recently elected as Chair of the South Florida Cultural Consortium, a 5-county regional arts alliance.

An experienced fundraiser, Marialaura has a strong background in individual giving, government grants, corporate support and foundations and secured major grants from institutional funders such as the National Endowment for the Arts, Ford Foundation and the Knight Foundation. She has managed major galas and special events in Miami and New York City, raising millions of dollars for the arts.

She has presented at various conferences including Americans for the Arts, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, National Arts Marketing Project Conference, Florida Alliance for

Arts Education, Florida Association of Museums, Arts and Business Council of Miami, and the Arts Extension Service - University of Massachusetts Amherst Winter Arts Management Institute. She is a frequent speaker for the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Miami and Senior Executive Orientation programs as well as for The Miami Foundation's Miami Fellows program.

Marialaura studied theater and dance at Universidad de Puerto Rico (UPR) under Gilda Navarra, Idalia Pérez Garay, Jorge Luis Ramos Escobar, Dean Zayas, Rosabel Otón and Viveca Vazquez. A member of UPR's Teatro Rodante, her favorite role was The Young Lady in August Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata.

As part of her work in the arts and social services space, Marialaura worked with theaters in Puerto Rico, including Teatro del Sesenta, where she performed for two years in ¡Mete Mano...es cuestión de bregar!, a touring play educating the public on HIV/AIDS with shows in schools, prisons, community centers and housing projects; and, with Cuarzo Blanco (Balseando con Edelmira by Sergio Arrau; El Misterio de la No Lluvia by Adriana Pantoja.)

She trained in ballet, jazz, modern, Spanish dance and pantomime in Puerto Rico under Nana Hudo. She performed with Teatro del Sesenta, Cuarzo Blanco, Danza Contacto, Ecuador's Wilson Pico and studied in workshops with Peru's Yuyachkani, led by Miguel Rubio.

Marialaura has longtime hands-on experience in making the arts accessible to people with disabilities. Beginning in the late eighties, she worked for nine years with Balletteatro Infantil de Nana Hudo, as an Administrative Assistant in the dance studio; as a Production Coordinator in dozens of dance theater shows; as an Assistant Dance Instructor for students with disabilities including children affected by spina bifida and on the autism spectrum; and, as a Grantswriter for Taller de Varones, an initiative to provide free ballet training for boys and young men ages (3-25), producing alumni who went on to perform with New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater, Ballet de San Juan, Ballet Concierto de Puerto Rico, and Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet, among others.

In the early nineties, Marialaura worked as a Production Assistant with Rompeformas: Maratón de Baile, Performance y Visuales, an experimental dance and performance summer festival, which presented more than 60 Hispanic/Latino/a/é/x artists from across the Americas in performances, exhibitions, theater installations, poetry and spoken word events, panel discussions and workshops in San Juan from 1989-1996. Produced by Viveca Vázquez (San Juan-based Taller de Otra Cosa) and Merián Soto (NYC-based Papatian), Rompeformas gave Marialaura the unique opportunity to work with phenomenal artists including United States Artist Fellow Awilda Sterling-Duprey, MacArthur Fellowship-winner Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Guggenheim Fellow Coco Fusco, Bessie Award-winner Arthur Aviles, and Nuyorican Poets Café Founding Poets: Rev. Pedro Pietri, Miguel Algarin and Sandra Maria Esteves.

Marialaura has a MA in Arts Administration from Goucher College and a BA with double major in Theater Arts Management and Spanish from University of Miami. Marialaura is a proud member of the United Way's Women United Miami leadership group.