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## David Blasher Appointed New Executive Director of MAP Fund, One of the Longest-Running Funders for Performing Artists in the U.S.

*This announcement comes with additional leadership and programming changes that will strengthen MAP's impact as it enters a new chapter*

**NEW YORK, NY — MAP Fund is pleased to appoint David Blasher, a seasoned arts and law professional, as the new Executive Director.** Blasher will officially succeed Moira Brennan, following her two decades at MAP Fund, and will bring his unique experience across nonprofit and corporate organizations to bolster MAP's commitment to investing in performing artists as the critical foundation of co-creating a more equitable and vibrant society. **As one of the longest-running funding sources for new performance works in the United States and its territories,** MAP Fund is proudly continuing and expanding its work and programs under Blasher's direction.

"Performing arts show us that life can be a creative practice. MAP is committed to our ancient need to gather, resonate, elucidate, and experiment through artistic movement, voice, and storytelling. MAP's team cares deeply about artists and collective leadership across the field. It's an honor to steward this next chapter at the MAP Fund with embodied imagination." — **David Blasher, Executive Director**

Brennan introduced Blasher to MAP Fund in 2021 when she hired him as the consulting Operations Manager for MAP's Scaffolding for Practicing Artists (SPA) Program. Blasher devised organizational systems designed to sustainably support the program's mission of providing artists with one-on-one coaching sessions and peer artist gatherings. In this role, Blasher supported the SPA director, Ron Ragin, with thought partnership, systems upgrade/integration, direct support to artists, scaling, and strategic planning. Given his robust background with the MAP Fund, Blasher is prepared to step into a more prominent role in developing programs and strategies and activating plans that align with MAP Fund's mission. **Blasher's appointment is not the only leadership change at MAP Fund, as the start of Fall 2023 marks a number of additional exciting changes.**

**Starting on October 15, the current SPA director Ron Ragin, will become MAP Fund's first Director of Programs,** stewarding the current Grants Program and SPA, as well as leading upcoming programmatic initiatives. He will work closely with Blasher to re-envision modes to achieve MAP's goals. **MAP is also welcoming eight new coaches to SPA — Khadija Nia Adell, Janani Balasubramanian, Chelsea Goding-Doty, Spirit McIntyre, Rebecca Mwase, Daniel Penilla, Black Pruitt, and Taja Will as new coaches — doubling the size of the Coach Ensemble to sixteen.** This expansion provides more diverse support to artists' needs, and it also supports the increase in SPA gatherings for 2024.

**SPA was launched in 2012** and takes an artist-centered approach that honors the artistic process, providing support for practicing artists in a judgment-free environment. SPA provides one-on-one coaching with an experienced advisor for 12 months and a two-day facilitated gathering wherein SPA artists coach each other. SPA has engaged over 270 artists, and a 2019 report found that participation in the program has a strong, positive impact on their lives and work.

**MAP Fund is also pleased to announce Meital Waibsnaider as its new Board Chair as of August 2023.** Waibsnaider is General Counsel at Blue State and has been on MAP's board since 2020. She co-chaired the recent executive search committee and has been an organizing force in uniting a board that includes many new members. Her commitment to MAP's mission, alongside her background in arts and legal acumen, makes her a great fit to work closely with Blasher and to activate board member expertise.

"David will bring additional leadership, wisdom, and creativity to our programs and an exceptional sense of commitment to our artists. He will be a driving force in helping MAP evolve in its mission to invest in performing artists and their work as the critical foundation of imagining and co-creating a more equitable and vibrant society. We're delighted to have David on board and can't wait to get started." — **Meital Waibsnaider, Board Chair of MAP Fund**

**Since 1989, MAP has championed cultural equity and formal innovation in performance practices with an investment of more than \$36 million.** Over three decades, thousands of artists have received grants and strategic support for groundbreaking projects that interrogate presumptive cultural norms, challenge entrenched ideologies, and emphasize shared humanity. A few of MAP Fund's notable grantees have included the likes of **Ping Chong** (1989), **Alonzo King** (1997), **Tania Leon** (1996), **Kyle Abraham** (2011), **Chay Yew** (2001), **Young Jean Lee** (2006), **Larissa FastHorse** (2015), **Dread Scott** (2016) and **Alice Sheppard** (2017). In the most recent cycle in 2022, the Grants Program provided \$30,000 each to 88 live performance projects across all regions of the United States and additionally funded \$88,000 in artist-directed microgrants.

**The Executive Director appointment precedes the upcoming Grant Cycle for MAP Fund, which will be launched on October 24, 2023.**

"I am delighted that MAP Fund has a dedicated and talented new leader, David Blasher, as the Executive Director. He has a history with the organization and a vision to take MAP forward. As a board member, I am fully invested in supporting Blasher and the future of the MAP Fund" — **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Board Member** and Founding Artistic Director/Chief Visioning Partner, Urban Bush Women.

#### **More About David Blasher:**

Growing up in Eugene, Oregon with an artist mother and a father who worked in government, Blasher was always drawn to the arts and knew he wanted to make a difference in a creative

sphere. An interdisciplinary thinker with leadership experience across law, technology, and the arts, David served as the Director of Global Legal Operations and Innovation at NBCUniversal and as a litigation associate with the law firm Davis Wright Tremaine. His legal background includes pro bono work for the American Civil Liberties Union and direct legal support for clients at Outside In, a shelter for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness. From 2015 to 2021, David worked in various roles—as Board Chair and Treasurer—at Drama Club, a nonprofit that consistently cares for youth in New York City who are incarcerated and court-involved by creating space for them to thrive, using improvisation as their guide. As an artist, David plays the cello with a rock band and experimental ensembles and writes, produces and acts in short-form film projects. He holds a B.A. in Theater Studies from Yale University and a J.D. from the University of Oregon's School of Law.

Blasher's sensibility as an artist, coupled with a lawyer's mind and his leadership experience, sets him up for success in this significant role as Executive Director. His commitment to equity and social justice aligns with MAP Fund's values and mission, as MAP enhances its programming and prepares to support engaging artists in the upcoming grant cycle.

### **About MAP Fund**

Established in 1988 as a program of the Rockefeller Foundation, the MAP Fund invests in performing artists and their work. Through project grants, individualized coaching and peer gatherings, and artist-directed microgrants, MAP Fund offers artists time, space and resources to explore and develop their ideas in an encouraging and collaborative environment. MAP Fund's programming provides much-needed visibility to artists who have traditionally been excluded from arts philanthropy and invests in every stage of their careers. MAP continues to innovate and change what is valued in cultural philanthropy, moving ideas and people, from the margins into the mainstream. More than 8,000 artists have received MAP funding to actualize their works. In 2016, MAP became an independent 501(c)(3) and now operates under the charge of its own nine-person governing board.