

COLBURN

Project Leadership

Sel Kardan

President and CEO of Colburn

Sel Kardan joined the Colburn School as President and CEO in 2009, bringing years of experience to the position as a performing arts executive, educator, and violist. In his role as President and CEO, Kardan shapes and leads the future path of Colburn and its academic units: Conservatory of Music, Music Academy, Community School of Performing Arts, and Trudl Zipper Dance Institute, which together serve more than 2,000 students in music and dance from early childhood development to post-graduate studies. Kardan has overseen the creation of new academies for pre-college musicians and pre-professional ballet dancers; has grown Colburn's role as a cultural and educational resource in the Los Angeles community by expanding community engagement initiatives, need-based scholarships, and low-cost performances; and has developed local, national, and international partnerships emphasizing access to the institution's educational and performance excellence. Prior to coming to Colburn, Kardan served as President and CEO of the Music Institute of Chicago, where he was the driving force behind the creation of the Academy. He was formerly Executive Director of the Shriver Hall Concert Series in Baltimore and Executive Director of the Heifetz International Music Institute. A native of Philadelphia, Kardan is a graduate of the Peabody Institute and taught at both the pre-college and collegiate levels, and performed professionally as a violist prior to beginning an administrative career.

Maesha Merchant

Executive Vice President | Chief Operating Officer | Chief Financial Officer

Maesha Merchant is an enterprise leader with more than 21 years of global experience spanning operations, finance, strategy, technology, and transformation. Merchant joined Colburn in 2020 and currently aligns strategy, operations, and execution across the organization. She oversees the development of the Frank Gehry-designed expansion and the creation of its future business and operating model.

Since joining Colburn, Merchant has played a central role in significant enterprise growth and transformation, strengthening the institution's financial and operating position and contributing to an upgrade of Colburn's S&P credit rating to AA-. Her contributions have been recognized with the 2026 Chief Operating Officer Award from the Los Angeles Times and the 2024 CFO of the Year Award from the Los Angeles Business Journal.

Previously, Merchant held multiple C-suite roles at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Her executive breadth is shaped by 12 years in management consulting with Deloitte Consulting and Oliver Wyman, where she led complex transformations across financial services, health and human services, and education globally. Merchant also founded an education technology company and invests in and advises early-stage companies. She serves on boards and advisory organizations across business, technology, education, and social impact.

Merchant is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Jerome Fisher program in Management & Technology, where she earned three degrees: finance from the Wharton School, biomedical science, and international relations.

Andrew Millstein

Chairman of the Colburn Board of Directors

Andrew Millstein's career in the entertainment industry spans four decades. After running a small Hollywood based motion-control company, Millstein landed as the Head of Production for James Cameron's Digital Domain, where he oversaw production on such films as *The Fifth Element*, *Dante's Peak*, *Apollo 13*, *Titanic*, and Universal Theme Parks' Terminator 2 in 3D.

From Digital Domain, Millstein moved to Disney, first as a live-action production executive and then as President of Dream Quest Images, overseeing visual effects production. With the advent of full-blown 3D-CG animated feature films at Walt Disney Animation Studios, Andrew assumed production and executive leadership roles there, working in close partnership with Pixar's Ed Catmull and John Lasseter until becoming President of Disney Animation.

As Co-President of Fox/Disney's Blue Sky Studios, Millstein partnered with Robert Baird, leading over 500 employees and overseeing the development and production of Blue Sky's feature animation slate. With the shutdown of Blue Sky Studios in 2021, Millstein and Baird found a new home for their unfinished film *Nimona* at Annapurna and Netflix. Starring Riz Ahmed and Chloe Grace Moretz, *Nimona* was nominated for an Academy Award.

In 2022, Millstein became the Co-Head of Animation at Annapurna, working alongside fellow Co-Head, Robert Baird, where they oversee development and production on several animated features and work closely with Annapurna Television. Millstein is now an independent producer shepherding new film and television projects to global audiences around the world.

Yasuhisa Toyota

Dr. Yasuhisa Toyota is Executive Advisor and founder of Nagata Acoustics International. With nearly 50 years of experience in designing some of the world's finest performance venues, Toyota is an established international authority in the field of concert hall design. Joining Nagata Acoustics in 1977, he began his professional career. He later established a Los Angeles office in 2001, and in 2008 Nagata Acoustics International was formed. Toyota has been project leader for more than 50 concert halls and multipurpose hall projects. His expertise focuses on hall configuration design and acoustical spaces for orchestral, chamber music, and other non-amplified musical genres. Some of Toyota's most prominent acoustical designs include Tokyo's Suntory Hall, Danish Radio Concert Hall in Copenhagen, and Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Toyota studied at Kyushu Institute of Design and graduated with a Bachelor of Design degree in Acoustical Design and Engineering. In the summer of 2004, Toyota received honorary doctorates of science from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; and the Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles. Throughout his formative years, Toyota played saxophone and oboe with a performance career in the Kyushu Institute's student orchestra and later in amateur orchestras.

Michael Ferguson

Michael Ferguson is the co-founder of TheatreDNA and has planned, designed, and built over 300 performing arts venues in 20 countries, working with architectural firms such as Gehry Partners, Moshe Safdie, SANAA, and the Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) on performing arts projects of all types including: The Edward and Joyce Linde Music Building, a new concert hall and music spaces for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); Helzberg Concert Hall at the Kauffmann Center for the Performing Arts; a new flexible film, theatre, and music venue for the Los Angeles Natural History Museum; the Audrey Irmas Pavilion; and the Beckmen YOLA Center, the new home for the Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles. Ferguson's professional experience includes lighting design and sound design for theatre, live music, and circus. He is a member and former board member of the American Society of Theatre Consultants and a United Scenic Artist lighting designer, USA Local 829, IATSE. Ferguson is a graduate of the Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University and the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts.

Frederick Vogler

Multi-Grammy Award-winner Frederick Vogler is the principal sound designer and FOH mixer for the Hollywood Bowl and Walt Disney Concert Hall. Throughout the year, he also records the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Master Chorale, and the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square for commercial and broadcast release. Vogler works closely with composers, artists, directors, producers, and architects. Vogler's audio-visual design and consulting company, Sonitus, has worked on projects for Facebook in Menlo Park, California; the New World Symphony in Miami, Florida; Stanford University in Palo Alto, California; and CorpArtes in Santiago, Chile. Sonitus focuses on practical solutions with forward-looking technologies for modern-day performing arts and entertainment.

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