

Merger Talks With KDKA Parent Company

Several news organizations are reporting merger talks are being held between **Paramount Global** and **Warner Bros. Discovery**. Paramount's largest shareholder is **National Amusements** and the company's CBS unit owns two Pittsburgh television stations.



In an article written for *Variety*, Todd Spangler and Jennifer Mass report that a meeting was held in New York City on December 19 between the two companies' leaders.

The move is seen as part of an industry-wide effort to better compete in the streaming era. "I

think it speaks to the panic," industry analyst Rich Greenfield, co-founder of **LightShed Partners**, told CNN about the merger talks. "The industry is in for a very challenging future. They're going to try to get bigger to compete in streaming."

Spangler and Mass report that both companies "have enlisted bankers but the status of the talks are described as very preliminary. As of the end of Q3, Paramount Global reported long-term debt of \$15.6 billion, considerably less than [Warner Bros. Discovery] --- whose debt load stood at \$43.5 billion. But in terms of market value, Warner Bros. Discovery is the bigger fish, with a market capitalization of \$28.4 billion as of close of trading Dec. 20 com-

pared with \$10.3 billion for Paramount Global."

But a merger is not a guarantee. There are plenty of hurdles, including each company's debt load and federal regulations. It is even possible that key units (like CBS) could be divested to finance the deal.

Most financial experts appear to be against the deal. One even published an assessment with the bulky but descriptive title *We Have a Hard Time Seeing a Paramount Merger Happening*.



Concerns Bursting About Pop City

Is the Andy Warhol Museum being too ambitious? That's the subject of a recent report by WESA-FM's Bill O'Driscoll.

The concerns are centered around the Warhol's multimillion dollar Pop District project, which reimagines the area immediately surrounding the museum. It envisions a vibrant public and performance art complex. But the size of the project, writes O'Driscoll, has raised concerns inside and outside the Warhol. "The museum has been taken over by the alien that is the Pop District," he quotes one current employee.

Pop District is the signature effort of executive director Patrick

Moore. O'Driscoll explains that internal dissatisfaction began even before Pop District was announced. The concerns were that the project is too big and



distracts from the museum's mission. Some staffers felt that "they were left out of the loop" during the planning period. Five directors resigned within less than a year. "In the weeks before [chief curator Jessica] Beck's departure, one museum employee described the feeling there as one of

'constant malaise,' with 'directors jumping ship'".

Patrick Moore assures O'Driscoll that "the entire senior staff of the museum has been involved with the Pop District from day one" or that the Warhol is neglecting its core mission. [Read his full article here.](#)

In other **Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh** news, winners have been announced in the "Envisioning a Just Pittsburgh" initiative. The goal, explains a press release, is to encourage local artists "to share their visions for a just and equitable Pittsburgh." [Read the full press release for more information.](#)

RAD Hits Record High

Pittsburgh's rebounding economy means higher sales tax revenue --- and a record budget for the **Allegheny Regional Asset District** (RAD).

RAD's board of directors has approved a \$139.7 million budget for 2024. This is an impressive 8% increase over 2023.



"We are excited to provide more funding to these places than ever before," said chairman Daniel J. Griffin, Chair in a press release. "It's a privilege to live in a county with so many civic treasures, and it's our privilege as board members to consistently provide more

funding to the organizations that make our region so wonderful and livable."

The majority of the grants will go to assets that are free to the public year-round such as regional parks, trails and public libraries. Among the major beneficiaries are the **Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium** (\$1.5 million), the **Pittsburgh CLO** (\$800,000), the **Senator John Heinz Regional History Center** (\$600,000) and the **August Wilson African American Cultural Center** (\$410,000).

A pdf of the full budget can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

GPAC Restructures

Mia Hooper has been promoted by the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC) to the newly created position of chief operating officer (COO)

GPAC's announcement explains that, as the organization's COO, she "will be responsible for helping staff translate strategies and priorities into implementable daily operations to meet the organization's objectives." The position also puts her second in the management structure.



Hooper's promotion (she had been Director of Development and Grantmaking) is part of executive director Patrick Fisher's restructuring efforts "with the goal of improving capacity to maximize [GPAC's] organizational impact."

Another newly created position is that of Advocacy and Communications Associate with artist/activist Ajani Powell hired. Powell's job is "to gather, interpret, and disseminate information promoting the visibility, reach, and sustainability of the region's arts and culture sector."

Three other critical changes have been made to the GPAC management structure. [Details are available in Fisher's blog posting](#).

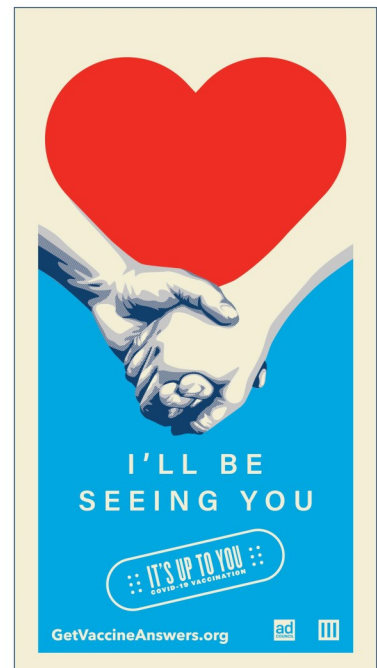


"Gymnast" Casting News

Deadline's Matt Grober has confirmed that Ethan Embry and Margarite Levieva have joined the cast of "The Gymnast." Although a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article says that production has wrapped, the Deadline article and IMDB suggests that shooting continues in the Pittsburgh area.

The film is about a 14-year-old gymnast with dreams of competing in the Olympics and her devoted father. Their relationship is tested when she suffers a potentially career-ending injury. Young newcomer Britney Wheeler portrays the teen gymnast. Primary casting is being handled by Kate Geller (kgcastingsearch@gmail.com)

"The Gymnast" is being produced by **Raised by Wolves** with support of the **Sundance Institute** and the **Gotham Film & Media Institute**.



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\$1.6 Mill For Black Arts

Nearly 40 grants totaling \$1.6 million have been awarded as part of Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh.

Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh (ABAP) is a joint project of the **Heinz Endowments** and the **Pittsburgh Foundation** to support African American artistry. The project received a boost in 2020 thanks to a \$2 million gift provided by MacKenzie Scott, the co-founder of **Amazon Inc.** and the ex-wife of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos.



“Black artists and arts organizations in our community produce amazing work, but the financial challenges they face are significant,” Pittsburgh Foundation President and CEO Lisa Schroeder explains in a press release. “We expect that extending the grant time frame to two years for most awardees will relieve some of the financial stress and allow artists and arts organizations more time to develop projects.”

You can read the full list of ABAP recipients by [clicking here](#).



SportsNet Deal

The **Pittsburgh Pirates** have joined the **Pittsburgh Penguins** in co-owning SportsNet Pittsburgh, reports Eric Heyl for Patch Pittsburgh. The official announcement was made on December 13.

The cable channel began in 1986 as Pirates Cable Network and has gone through multiple owners and names since. It is part of a collection of regional sports networks that was divested by the heavily indebted **Warner Bros. Discovery**.

Heyl writes that on-air talent will remain unaffected and the network will continue to be managed by New England Sports Network, which is primarily owned by **Fenway Sports Group**. Read Heyl's [article here](#).

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New ED For COAP

Australian author, artistic director and festival manager Caro Llewellyn begins her new job this month: as executive director of **City of Asylum/Pittsburgh**.

City of Asylum/Pittsburgh (COAP) was established in 2004 as a resource for writers exiled from their countries for their controversial writing.

According to [Wikipedia](#), Caro is the daughter of noted Australian poet and travel writer Kate Brinkworth Llewellyn. Her profession-

al career includes stints at the publishing giant Random House (part of **Bertelsmann & Company**), managing the World Voices Festival for **PEN America** and most recently as chief executive of **The Wheeler Centre** in Melbourne. Llewellyn's 2019 memoir was shortlisted for one of Australia's biggest literary honors, the Stella Prize.

WESA-FM's Bill O'Driscoll recently posted an article on Llewellyn which can be read [here](#).



Channel
Pittsburgh

CAMDEN TOY
1955-2023

Two Ballet Vets Retire

Two veteran performers have announced their retirements from the **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre** (PBT), reports the blog On Stage Pittsburgh.

 Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre

“While I have enjoyed the rush of performing, I think what I’ll miss most is daily studio life at PBT,” the blog quotes Gabrielle Thurlow. “It’s such a unique experience that fosters dedication, a roller coaster of emotions, and some truly beautiful relationships.” Thurlow has been with the company for seventeen years.

iHeart Regroups

The parent company of seven Pittsburgh radio stations, **iHeart Media**, has “a leadership realignment.”



A press release explains that this is an effort to enhance “the company’s ability to increase its focus on new high-growth opportunities” that builds on a 2020 restructuring.

Kevin LeGrett, president of the iHeart Sports Network, will focus exclusively on the company’s political and sports platforms. This includes WBGG-AM (a.k.a. ESPN Pittsburgh). At press time, it remained unclear how the company’s other Pittsburgh stations will be affected.

Joseph Parr has been a member of the PBT for sixteen years. “Pittsburgh has been my home for nearly two decades,” Parr is quoted by the blog. “I look forward to what the future holds and to continue to cheer my PBT family on from a seat in the audience!”

Read the [entire post here](#).

In a separate post, the blog reports that PBT soloist Grace Rookstool has been named one of the “25 to Watch” by *Dance Magazine*. Check it out by [clicking here](#).



ED Departs

Kristen Linfante has stepped down as executive director of **Chamber Music Pittsburgh**, reports the blog On Stage Pittsburgh.

Chamber Music Pittsburgh (CMP) was established in 1961 to foster an appreciation for chamber music in the Pittsburgh community by offering performances and educational programs.

“I am proud to leave Chamber Music Pittsburgh on solid footing with so much potential for future growth and development. It has become my life’s work to make absolutely everyone feel welcome, seen, and heard within our sphere,” the blog quotes Linfante. “Over the past ten years, CMP has returned to the roots of chamber music when it was performed in living rooms, bars, and coffee shops. Chamber music is not about prestige or exclusivity—it’s about sharing live music experience with the community.”

During her long (ten year) tenure, Linfante strengthened CMP’s financing and expanded the organization’s programs. [Read the full blog post](#).

MOMENTS IN TIME King Day Special

Streaming Monday, January 15, 10:00pm



Channel
Pittsburgh



Teen Award Nominees

Nominees for the fourth annual High School Drama Awards have been announced, reports the blog On Stage Pittsburgh.

The award is a program of **Prime Stage Theatre** to recognize excellence in non-musical high school plays. A pdf list of nominees is [available here](#).

“What makes these awards unique,” the blog quotes coordinator John Dolphin, “is that to be eligible, the students must be in a backstage leadership role or an onstage performance role. We encourage adult mentorship and assistance, but in the end, these productions are student-run.”

The full blog posting is [available here](#).

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Audacy– CBS App Deal

In something like a corporate family reunion, a content distribution agreement has been reached between **Audacy, Inc.** and **Paramount Global's** CBS.

Audacy merged with CBS' radio division in 2017 and still owns six Pittsburgh radio stations. These include KDKA-AM. Two local television stations continue under CBS ownership: KDKA-TV and WPKD-TV (a.k.a. KDKA+).

The deal makes audio news streams from KDKA and thirteen other CBS-owned television stations available on the Audacy app. “In 2018, CBS Stations were pioneers in local news streaming. And today, we are providing

those channels on radio streaming in a first-of-its-kind venture with Audacy,” said Sahand Sepehrnia, Senior Vice President of Streaming, CBS Stations in a press release. “We continue to find innovative ways to serve our audiences, whether that's on TV, streaming or radio.”

In related news, Audacy has announced a schedule change for the CBS Sports Radio network (owned by Paramount Global but operated by Audacy). Among the most notable is the promotion of “JR Sportsbrief” from a late-night offering to a prime mid-evening slot. These changes affect local station KDKA-FM. Details are available by [clicking here](#).

Images



Among the many events marking Martin Luther King Day is the annual “Let Freedom Sing” program at the Kelly-Strayhorn.

Click on the photo to learn more.



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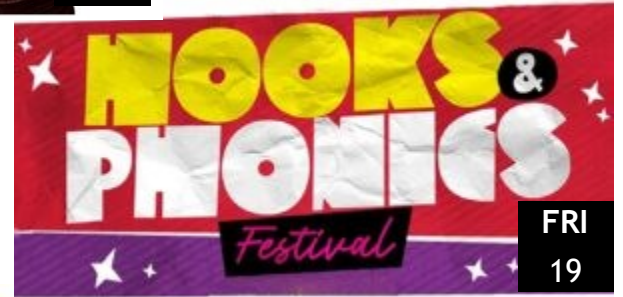
WED
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TUE
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THU
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FRI
19



SAT
13



THU
25



FRI
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SAT
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TUE
30



MON
15

Opportunities

A part-time administrative specialist is being sought by the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council**. [Details and application here](#).

The relatively young **Barrel & Flow Festival** has two key positions open. The details are [here](#).

Submissions for visual and performing artists are being accepted by the Pittsburgh airport with the online process [beginning here](#).

Paid and volunteer positions are available at the **National Aviary**. Click [here](#).

Two full-time and one part-time positions remain the **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre** that includes someone to head protection. [Read the list](#).

Chamber Music Pittsburgh is seeking a new executive director. [Details are available here](#).

A stage manager is being sought by the **Pittsburgh Opera** for next season. This, and other openings, are available [here](#).

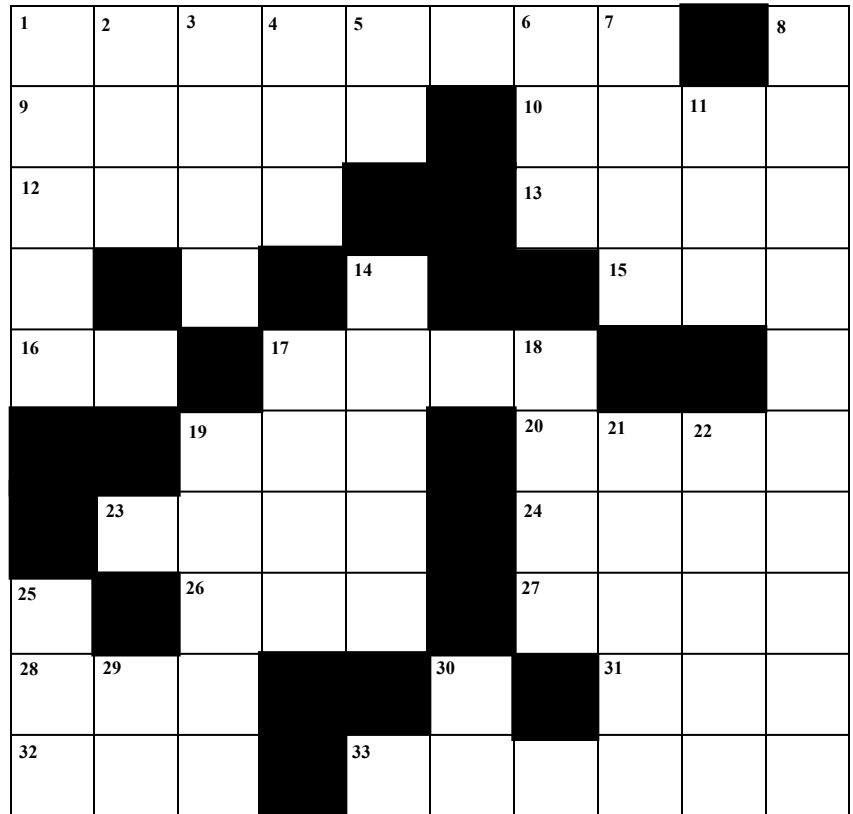
Positions available at the local **Audacy** radio stations include [producers, promotions and tech](#).

The **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** is booking auditions for a [trumpeter](#).



Across

1. Funny musical brothers of the 1960s
9. A no-no subject
10. Gumbo ingredient
12. Ancient kingdom along the Jordan River
13. Atkins, for example
15. Chart
16. A 1980's TV sitcom or a 1990's TV drama (both starring George Clooney)
17. Dull
19. Falsehood
20. Bill of Rights grp.
23. Diplomacy
24. Large lake decimated by the USSR
26. Eisenhower, to pals and fans
27. A camera isn't a camera without it
28. Tavern
31. *Shanghai Girls* novelist Lisa
32. The network that aired (then cancelled) 1-Across
33. See 1-Down



Down

1. Future wild and crazy comic who wrote for 1-Across (with 33-Across)
2. Alfred E. Neuman magazine
3. Common woodwind instrument
4. One of the 1-Across
5. Half of Santa's famous chortle
6. British singer Stewart, to pals
- 7.
8. Perennial presidential "candidate" featured on 1-Across
11. What milk is called after the fat is removed
14. Greece's largest island
17. One of the 1-Across
18. Ancient deity
19. Evil doers' homes
21. Popular toothpaste brand
22. Kent's comic book girlfriend
25. Competitor to 32-Across
29. Type III toxin
30. Twelve-step letters?

Last Month's Solution

G	R	I	N	C	H			M	
E	E	R	I	E		O	B	O	E
I	N		P	A	R	L	O	R	S
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L	I	K	E	S			S	I	N
	D	N	A			E		A	
P	O	O	C	H		V	A		
		W	H	O	V	I	L	L	E
		N		P	E	L	E		