

## Increasing Film Credit?

Pittsburgh's post-strike TV/film production remains sluggish. But interest is growing to improve the situation by increasing the



state's tax incentive program, reports Joshua Axelrod for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Axelrod explains that "17 years after Pennsylvania debuted its film tax credit program, the industry landscape has seen great change. Competition has grown

increasingly fierce, with some locales --- including Georgia, Illinois, West Virginia and Canada --- offering totally uncapped film incentives to lure work there."

"[Pennsylvania's] program has not kept current with the industry," Axelrod quotes Dawn Keezer of the **Pittsburgh Film Office**.

Joshua Axelrod's extensive article can be read by [clicking here](#).

## Warhol Museum Caught In Gaza Conflict

A small but persistent online group is criticizing an Andy Warhol Museum exhibition as being politically biased, reports Colin Williams for *Pittsburgh City Paper*. The criticism claims that the museum is pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian.



On October 7, 2023, members of the Hamas militant group attacked neighboring Israeli communities and military bases. More than 1,000 people were killed and over 250 were taken hostage. Global sympathy for Israel evaporated after the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

responded with an extensive military action resulting in over one million Gazans displaced and tens of thousands killed.

Some museum staff members had placed opinion placards near Andy Warhol's work "Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century" referring to the continuing conflict.

An Instagram account called [Change the Museum](#) has gained over 2,200 likes and several comments regarding the installation and the placards. To learn more, [read Williams' article](#).

## Public Art Controversy

A controversy regarding public art has appeared in the city's Homewood neighborhood, reports Bill O'Driscoll for WESA-FM.

The issue is a piece proposed for Homewood Public Park, which a local sports organization uses for its many youth programs. Noted artist Mikael Owunna has offered to create a 36-foot-long photographic banner to hang on the side of the park's fieldhouse. The piece, titled "Ancestral Echoes, Future Hopes," uses Owunna's distinctive style (photos of people covered in luminescent body paint) to depict four African Americans in thoughtful poses.

Not everyone is pleased with work, which one critic described as "somber". O'Driscoll quotes another person who complains that "this is a football field" and that the piece will exude "the total kind of opposite of the energy" that one wants.

For more information, [read O'Driscoll's full article here](#).



## Paramount Global: An Update

The parent company of two Pittsburgh television stations, **Paramount Global**, continues to be a focus of industry attention. Paramount Global is primarily owned by **National Amusements** which is, itself, controlled by the family of the late media mogul Sumner Redstone (1923-2020).



*Pittsburgh Applause* reported [last month](#) that comedian and entrepreneur Byron Allen's firm **Allen Media Group** is offering \$30 billion for Paramount. **Warner Bros. Discovery** had been in merger talks before the Allen bid. However, on February 27, [TheWrap.com's](#)

[Lucas Manfredi reports](#) that those discussions have been halted.

Film and TV production company **Skydance Media** (founded by the son of controversial technology entrepreneur Larry Ellison) has also expressed an interest, Skydance has had a partnership agreement with Paramount Pictures since 2006.

Adding to this complex situation was private equity firm **Apollo Global Management**, which had been considering the purchase of National Amusements. That interest is apparently no more, according to [Deadline](#).

Paramount Global continues to struggle. The company's 2023

Fourth Quarter revenue reportedly dropped 6% with streaming service [Paramount+ continuing to lose hundreds of millions of dollars](#). The stock price has dropped. Plans call for [cuts in production costs](#) through more reality series and smaller licensing fees for CBS' original programming. Massive layoffs are occurring and Paramount Global is expected to take [a \\$1 billion write-off](#) for the First Quarter of 2024.



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## KDKA Parent Reorganizes

A bankruptcy court has approved **Audacy, Inc.'s** reorganization plan, the company has announced. Audacy owns six Pittsburgh radio stations. The approval is a significant step for the company's emergence from Chapter 11.



"Today's announcement marks a powerful step forward for Audacy, positioning the Company for an exciting future," declared Audacy's David J. Field in a statement. "As expected, we have achieved a speedy confirmation of our prepackaged Plan, which will enable Audacy to pursue our strategic goals and oppor-

tunities in the dynamic audio business."

Closer to home, two local Audacy stations received four honors at the annual awards program of the **Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters** (PAB). The kudos were in the areas of digital media, radio newscasts and on-air personality. See the full list by clicking [here](#).

Additionally, KDKA-AM sports personality Ron Cook has announced his retirement; sports reporter Shelby Cassese has left the station to work free-lance; and on-air personality Marty Griffin is recovering from pneumonia.

## Uber Your Way To The Next Opera

An experimental transportation program is being launched by the **Pittsburgh Opera**, the company has announced.

## PITTSBURGH OPERA

Funded by the **Richard King Mellon Foundation**, the program offers vouchers for **Uber** rides to each performance.

"We believe this is the first program of its kind," crows the Opera's general director, Christopher Hahn, in a press release, "both within in the region and within the wider opera world." It is also an effort to address attendance and ticket sales issues. "Dwindling subscriber bases have been a concern for [classical performing arts] troupes for decades," explains **WESA-FM's Bill O'Driscoll**, who adds that "observers have attributed the shrinkage to things like aging audiences."

The rideshare program will allow ticket buyers to add \$60 to their Pittsburgh Opera ticket purchase, at no extra cost, for their roundtrip to the performance. Patrons must have an Uber account. Full details are [available here](#).



## Aldean Eatery/Stage Coming To Pittsburgh

Country music singer/songwriter Jason Aldean is opening a restaurant in Pittsburgh, reports Patch.com's Eric Heyl.

Pittsburgh will be the third location for Jason Aldean's Kitchen + Rooftop Bar chain (which is one of the dining concepts of **TC Restaurant Group**). The first opened in Nashville in 2018 and the second in Gatlinburg. Aldean's other business interests include a hunting company called Buck Commander.

Each restaurant includes a stage for live performances, something local musicians and singers will certainly appreciate. "I'm proud to have a permanent destination [in Pittsburgh] where fans can stay connected to my music . . . and enjoy some of my favorite food and drinks," Heyl quotes from a statement released by Aldean. It will be located at Acrisure Stadium (formerly Heinz Field).

Aldean created controversy last year with the release of the song,

"Try That in a Small Town." Some saw it as a celebration of rural life while others considered it racist and anti-city. The music video added to the debates: it was shot at the site of a notorious 1927 lynching.

TC Restaurant Group also operates eateries in partnership with Miranda Lambert and Luke Bryan. The Pittsburgh restaurant is expected to open in late March or early April. Patrons may even get a chance to Aldean up-close at the new location when the singer performs in the region this summer.

### AWARD SEASON: KEEPING UP

EMMYS

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S AGs

WGAs

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## Musicians Agreement

Another strike has been averted as a tentative agreement has been made between the **American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada** (AFM) and the **Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers** (AMPTP), the union has announced.

“This agreement is a major win for musicians who have long been under-compensated for their work in the digital age,” explained AFM’s Tino Gagliardi in a press release. “We have secured historic breakthroughs in streaming residuals, established critical guardrails against the misuse of [artificial intelligence], gained meaningful wage increases, and made other important improvements. This agreement represents a watershed moment for the artists who create the soundtracks for countless film and TV productions.”



Full details have yet to be released. The tentative agreement needs to be ratified by the union membership.



## WGAE Names ED

Sam Wheeler has been named the new executive director of the **Writers Guild of America East** (WGAE), the union has announced.

WGAE membership includes professional film and television writers in Pennsylvania.



Most recently, Wheeler was the National Executive Director of the **American Guild of Musical Artists** (AGMA) where he negotiated on behalf of artists that include musicians with the **Pittsburgh Opera**.

WGAE’s Lisa Takeuchi Cullen is quoted in a press release calling Wheeler “a transformative leader” with experience in “leading tough negotiations and diligently administering collective bargaining agreements.”

Sam Wheeler assumes his new post on April 1.

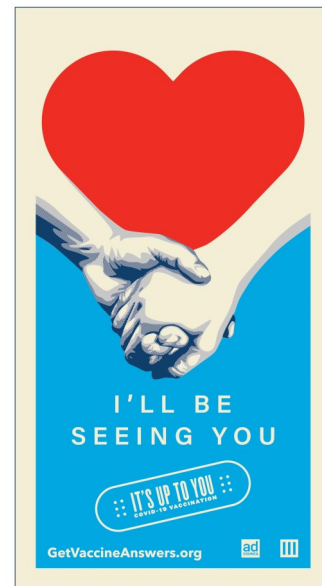
## IATSE Preps

Negotiations are set to begin this month between the **International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees** (IATSE) and the **Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers** (AMPTP).

IATSE recently issued a briefing to members explaining that the negotiating committee is committed to “direct communication” and that members “should continue to expect to receive accurate and up-to-date information before the press or the general public.”



To that end, the union has set up two micro web sites that include “roadmaps of the negotiation process, historical context and past priorities, in-depth negotiation educational videos, and a toolkit” for campaign branding. Details and links to the microsites are available [here](#).





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## Local Museums Ranked

The annual *USA Today* reader poll has ranked the **Senator John Heinz History Center** as the nation's top history museum and the **Children's Museum of Pittsburgh** (CMP) as the nation's second-best children's museum.

"This national recognition reflects the dedication of our staff and the appreciation of the communities we serve throughout the country," Heinz's Andy Masich said in a press release.

"Pittsburgh is the City of Champions, and we're thrilled to be able to add another #1 to the list. We want to extend our sincere thanks to our visitors, members, and community partners in Western Pa. and beyond who voted."

Pittsburgh's children's museum outranked larger cities such as Chicago and Philadelphia. The February 23 article states: "Inside the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, visitors can explore numerous hands-on, interactive exhibit areas meant to spark curiosity. The Garage is the place to explore things that bounce, race, and roll, while the Art Studio allows kids to express their creativity through various art forms. And the Kindness Gallery lets kids try different forms of communication to send messages of empathy and kindness." Indianapolis' children's museum came in as #1.

## Ferris Wheel Planned For Pittsburgh's North Side

The ambitious Esplanade will now have an interesting addition --- a Ferris wheel.

Esplanade is a 4475 million mixed-use development project on the city's North Side by local real estate firm **Piatt Companies**. Construction could begin as early as this fall.

The original wheel was designed and built by George Ferris Jr. (1859-1896) while he was living and working in Pittsburgh. The ride made its debut at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

"As imagined," writes the [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's Ryan Deto](#), the 180-foot Ferris wheel will "sit atop a three-story building and serve as an exclamation point for the 15-acre project." Piatt spokesperson Molly Onufer explained to Deto that the wheel will add to the city's entertainment operations and provide spectacular views of Downtown Pittsburgh. Details on the Esplanade project is [available here](#).

In related news, the city has approved the installation of a 917-square foot video screen near PNC Park.

## Images



*The Row House brings back its popular Pittsburgh Japanese Film Festival with an interesting collection of new movies and classic by groundbreaking directors. The full schedule is available on [PGEvents](#).*



## NEA Grants

Nine local organizations are among the 1,200 grants awarded by the **National Endowment for the Arts** (NEA), reports Sharon Eberson for the blog On Stage Pittsburgh.

One grant that Eberson highlights is “\$35,000 for the world premiere of Mark Clayton Souther’s latest 19th-century play, ‘The Coffin Maker’, directed by Monteze Freeland for **Pittsburgh Public Theater**.”

Additional local grants go to a professional development program, an international residency program and the production of new work. The full list of regional recipients is available on [Eberson’s blog posting](#).



## Flex Grants

Thirty area arts organizations have been awarded a total of \$150,000, the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC) has announced.

The grants are part of the Creative Sector Flex Fund program of the **Pennsylvania Council on the Arts** (PCA) which provides \$5,000 to each group.



“The Creative Sector Flex Fund provides crucial support for small arts and culture organizations,” said GPAC’s Mona Wiley in a blog post. “The flexibility also allows the grantees to use the awarded funding in ways that ensure the most significant impact for their organizations and communities.”

Recipients include a film presentation organization, a West African dance troupe and various musical groups.

## New Membership Program

A new membership system is being introduced by the **Mattress Factory** to create a “revitalized experience” to provide “more ways to connect, engage, learn, and be inspired.”



Eight membership levels with annual fees ranging from \$55 to \$5,000 provide various levels of benefits. The basic membership gives an individual free, unlimited access and a 15% discount at the museum’s gift shop. The highest level --- dubbed the Director’s Circle --- includes special VIP events.

Details have been posted [here](#). The new membership system is scheduled to be launched on April 1.

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# Opportunities

The **Pittsburgh Youth Philharmonic Orchestra** is seeking a new executive director for its five ensembles. [Details here.](#)

Applications for performers, vendors and other participants for this year's **Barrel & Flow** festival. [Details here.](#)

News and online positions are open at **Hearst Communications'** WTAE-TV. [Details here.](#)

The revived literary zine *Yawp* is accepting applications of poetry and art for its next installment. The deadline is March 25. [Details here.](#)

The **National Aviary** is seeking a full-time event professional as well as seasonal people. [Details here.](#)

Various positions are available at the **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre**, including in marketing and production. [Details here.](#)

Positions open at the **Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh** include those in events, education, conservation and development. [Details here.](#)



## Masters Class Program

Nationally renowned artists from around the country have agreed to lead a series of workshops at the **Sweetwater Center for the Arts**, the center has announced.



A press release describes the center's Master Class program as an "enriching and immersive series [that] promises to offer an unparalleled opportunity for enthusiasts and professionals alike to delve deeper into their artistic passions through questions, discussions, and personalized attention." Details are [available here](#).

## NEP News

Lise Heidal has been appointed president of the European division of Pittsburgh-based media technology firm **NEP Group**.

Heidal has over 25 years of experience, most recently with Norwegian television station TV 2 Direkte (owned by **Egmont International Holding A/S**).



A company press release explains that "Heidal will set the strategy, priorities and focus areas for nine countries in Northern, Central and Southern Europe, as well as in the UK and Ireland, to lead the future planning of NEP's broadcast services businesses."

Heidal assumes her new role on April 1.

## Mosaic's New Home

A signature work by innovative sculptor Virgil Cantini (1919-2009) has found a new home, reports WESA-FM's Bill O'Driscoll.

Cantini was born in Italy but spent most of his life in Weirton and Pittsburgh. He gained national recognition --- and a Guggenheim Fellowship --- for his large-scale works reflecting clever uses of enamel and steel. [Read more about [Virgil Cantini on Wikipedia](#) - ed.]

The work in question is an untitled 1964 abstract mosaic. Comprised of 28 panels, it was originally installed in a pedestrian tunnel. It is now inside the Steel Plaza T Station on Grant Street in Downtown Pittsburgh.

"It's almost like walking through a tunnel of jewels," the artist's daughter, Lisa Cantini-Seguín, told O'Driscoll, referring to the mosaic's interesting tiles. Read O'Driscoll's [full article here](#).

## WPXI Wins Awards

WPXI-TV, owned by **Cox Media Group**, has been honored with three awards at the annual **Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters** (PAB) awards program.



One of the kudos went to the station's special report on the fifth anniversary of the Tree of Life shooting. The others involved the February 2023 train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio and the financial settlement involving the 2021 death of a local man after he was tazed by police.

"We are immensely proud of our team for their outstanding work and dedication to excellence," said WPXI's Scott Trabandt in a press release. "These awards are a testament to their hard work and commitment to delivering high-quality journalism to our viewers."



Channel  
Pittsburgh

## Across

1. Classic comedy TV show of the late 1960's
7. A cool place to live?
8. See 21-Down
11. Levi competitor
12. Common still life subject
14. Fully little girl in a big chair seen on 1-Across
16. "Hollow Man" poet Eliot
18. Larry and Curley's pal
19. Madrid "Rah!"
21. What *Pittsburgh Applause* provides you each month
22. The employer of 10-Down, commonly
24. Popular cleanser brand
25. Uber or Lyft alternative
28. Mobile music machine
29. "King of Fighters" killer
30. Funny workplace movie about three empowered secretaries

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## Down

1. Comedian, actress and the subject of this puzzle
2. Improve, as in wine
3. Fonda's cinematic beekeeper
4. Pass it for \$200?
5. Arizona native person
6. Biblical boatman
9. Set up for a crime
10. Snarky yet funny customer service rep seen on 1-Across
13. Lucy's pal in mischief
15. Betty Friedan org.
17. Mathematical murder?
20. "Barnaby Jones" star Buddy
21. Funny movie with Steve Martin as a possessed man (with 8-Across)
23. Ironic Russian NGO\*
26. Famed boxer Muhammad
27. The year Rome's first emperor dies, in Roman numerals

### Last Month's Solution

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