

For immediate release

Boston Art and Music Soul (BAMS) Festival to host free experiential symposium to elevate the safety, accessibility, sustainability and community engagement of events



Arts administrators, artists, emergency professionals & event organizers are invited to attend

BOSTON, MA - Performing arts and live entertainment events are catalysts for community-building and culture. What do our events look like when safety, equity, accessibility, and sustainability are conscientiously placed at their center? How can they also drive meaningful social change, equitable emergency response, and increased economic resilience for arts and events workers?

Boston, MA - The Art of Mass Gatherings Symposium (AoMG) is thrilled to announce its upcoming event at the Boston Arts Music and Soul Festival (BAMS Fest) on June 22nd and 24th, 2023. This year's symposium will bring together industry experts, academics, and festival organizers to explore emergency preparedness, safety, sustainability, accessibility, and community engagement through hands-on learning using festivals as classrooms.

BAMS Fest is a celebration of Black art, music, and culture and is expected to attract over 15,000 attendees this year in Boston, MA. The festival is a vital part of Boston's cultural heritage, providing a platform for emerging artists and promoting community engagement. The Art of Mass Gatherings Symposium recognizes the significance of the BAMS fest, in history and the future and its importance in promoting diversity and inclusion in the arts and entertainment industry.



Paul Willis
BAMS Festival



Nancy Smith
Boston OEM



Matthew Ché Kowal
Majestic Collaborations



Kara Elliott-Ortega
Chief of Arts and Culture, City of Boston



Tom Clareson
Performing Arts Readiness



Melissa Hector
Boston Public Health Commission



Charles G. Baldwin
Mass Cultural Council



Ciara Culligan
Emerald Necklace Conservancy



Michelle Vigilance
313WONProductions



Authentic Caribbean Foundation

Andrew Sharpe
Authentic Caribbean Foundation



Anne Taylor & Scott Towers
Boch Center

"Resilient communities are prepared to respond to challenges before they arise. Being able to identify the resources available, disseminate that information, and provide a space for belonging that is safe and accessible is critical to building our community's capacity to respond. BAMS Fest partnering with The Art of Mass Gatherings creates a collective of resilient organizers who are thinking intentionally about culture and safety, climate and sustainability, infrastructure and accessibility, and civic and community engagement." -Paul Willis, Managing Director, BAMS Fest

The AoMG is co-hosted by the Boston Office of Emergency Management, Performing Arts Readiness, Berklee School of Music, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, The Mass Cultural Council, and the Boch Center, The Office of Public Health Preparedness (OPHP), and several local event production professionals. It provides a unique opportunity for industry experts and festival organizers to share best practices, exchange ideas, and learn from each other's experiences. With the participation of these co-hosts, attendees will have access to valuable insights and resources that can help improve the safety, sustainability, and accessibility of large-scale events.

"The Boston Office of Emergency Management is proud to co-host the Art of Mass Gatherings Symposium at BAMS Fest. We believe that collaborating for this event provides the unique opportunity to share critical knowledge, resources, and best practices among industry leaders. This helps to ensure public safety during large-scale events and allows for preparedness outreach," said Nancy Smith, Program Manager Boston Office of Emergency Management.

"Boston is a city that understands how critical artists can be in city operations and works to integrate their input to vital elements of the city. The Art of Mass Gatherings (AoMG) harnesses the potential that Bostonian artists have in creating transformation in the city and supporting its communities in a unique and valuable way. Event professionals at BAMS and other festivals utilize our shared parks and streets in creative and innovative ways, and during times of disruption, we saw how valuable their contributions to response, recovery, and resilience can be. We look forward to an opportunity to network and skill-share with regional emergency management and public health organizations (and a curious public) at this important festival." Kara Elliott-Ortega Chief of Arts and Culture, City of Boston

In addition to the symposium on Saturday, June 24 from 9:30 am-3:30 pm at the festival grounds, the BAMS Fest will also host a series of workshops on "the Art of Mass Gatherings approach" during its inaugural BAMS CONX conference at the Berklee School of Music on Thursday, June 22. The symposium and workshops provide a unique opportunity for attendees to engage in hands-on learning, exchange ideas, and share best practices in emergency preparedness, safety, sustainability, accessibility, and community engagement.

"People who set up festivals are skilled at creating temporary cities with all of the necessary infrastructure such as water, waste, power, and structures," explains Matthew Ché Kowal, co-founder of Majestic Collaborations along with Molly North. "By sharing their knowledge and building skills in these areas, artists and event workers create more inclusive events, expand the safety and resilience of their entire communities, and become qualified for a wide range of job opportunities both in and outside of the arts."

The Art of Mass Gatherings Symposium is made possible by a grant from Performing Arts Readiness (PAR), funded by the Mellon Foundation, which provides support and resources to promote emergency preparedness and safety in the performing arts. "There are myriad concerns that event producers and

attendees need to consider in their work. We hope to help build capacity for our creative communities to adapt and respond if they are impacted by emergency, disaster, or long-term changes in climate in the near future.” said Tom Claerson, Director of PAR.

“With our non-profit mission to improve the Emerald Necklace park system for all, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy is thrilled to partner with BAMS Fest and Art of Mass Gatherings to make Franklin Park, the Necklace’s anchor park, an even more accessible, safe, sustainable and truly equitable, inclusive and inspiring venue for cultural partnerships—and learning to improve parks experience!” said Jen Mergel on behalf of the Conservancy. “This event will affirm parks’ role as shared green spaces to connect, affirm and empower collective care and community.”

The Office of Public Health Preparedness (OPHP), a Boston Public Health Commission service center, is proud to support the Office of Emergency Management and the Boston Art & Music Soul Festival during National Black Music Appreciation Month. OPHP will have CPR-certified Boston Medical Reserve Corps volunteers to staff the event to ensure the safety, joy, and well-being of the staff, musicians, and festival goers.”

The Boch Center is one of the nation’s leading nonprofit performing arts institutions and a guardian of the historic Wang and Shubert Theatres. As New England’s largest cultural venue, the Boch Center is home to theater, classical and popular music, dance, comedy, opera, Broadway musicals, family entertainment, and more. “With safety and accessibility paramount in today’s live event spaces, we are proud to be co-hosting the Art of Mass Gatherings Symposium at BAMS Fest and to have the opportunity to share our commitment to emergency preparedness and inclusive practices with industry leaders and event producers,” said Josiah A. Spaulding, Jr., President and CEO.

The Boston Arts Music and Soul Festival holds tremendous historical and cultural value for our city, and we are proud to be a co-host of the Art of Mass Gatherings Symposium,” said Melissa Hector, Director of Equitable and Strategic Initiatives at the Boston Public Health Commission. “City emergency management plays a crucial role in coordinating resources and response efforts during mass gatherings like BAMS Fest. The symposium enables city emergency management officials to collaborate with industry experts, festival producers, and community health organizations to develop comprehensive emergency preparedness plans that prioritize the safety and well-being of attendees. It serves as a platform to engage in crucial discussions and share best practices to ensure that festivals like BAMS Fest continue to thrive and benefit the community.”

“Mass Cultural Council serves the Commonwealth and all who live, work, visit, and play here by amplifying creativity, providing resources, expanding relationships, and championing transformational changes that maintain and grow a thriving creative and cultural ecosystem. Access as a system of inclusion is both iterative and responsive. BAMS with AoMG has created an invaluable learning event with peers, users, artists, officials, and technicians in alignment with essential city and state services.” Charles Baldwin, Mass Cultural Council

“As a community leader and event producer, I recognize the importance of the Art of Mass Gatherings approach to promote diversity, inclusion, and preparedness in the arts and entertainment industry. This year more than ever represents an alignment of conscious arts, culture resilience and resistance. Marked by no less than Mel Kings passing, the lingering reminders of COVID, and all that endured it, the Woke Movement, the National NAACP Conference being held in Boston this year and the leadership and

innovative presence of the formation of Mayor Wu's Green New Deal, the Art of Mass Gatherings is perfectly positioned as a unique event" said BAM Fest concierge, Michelle Vigilance, 313WON Productions.

Event details

The Art of Mass Gatherings at BAMS

June 22nd and 24th, 2023

Free registration: <https://events.humanitix.com/the-art-of-mass-gatherings-in-boston>

Join us at either or both of two all-day events:

- Thursday, June 22nd from 8a-4:30p at BAMS CONX at the [David Friend Recital Hall](#)
- Saturday, June 24th from 9a-4p on the BAMS Festival grounds on [Playstead Field in Franklin Park](#)

Thursday at BAMS CONX

8:00a - 4:30 pm at [BAMS CONX](#) / *David Friend Recital Hall*

You'll hear from our lineup of incredible local and national luminaries about their experiences and successful practices across the four pillars of the art of mass gatherings: safety, accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement. Don't miss our hands-on community asset mapping workshop, which will map the landscape of arts and cultural event resilience in the city for ongoing use by event and emergency professionals alike.

Enjoy a relaxed lunch from Boston culinary success story [Rhythm N Wraps](#) plus Topo Chico and Guayaki Yerba Mate, with plenty of time to get to know your fellow participants.

Several sensory and physical accessibility accommodations are available by advance request. Thursday's event is more of a presentation format where participants will be seated indoors.

Saturday at BAMS Fest

9:00a - 4:00 pm at [BAMS Festival](#) / *Playstead Field, Franklin Park*

We'll use the BAMS Festival as a hands-on classroom for learning how to enhance the safety, safety, accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement of events. Local experts will lead a variety of interactive site tours and hands-on workshops, and participants are invited to share their own experience and expertise throughout the day.

Lunch and morning coffee are included.

Several sensory and physical accessibility accommodations are available by advance request. This event does involve significant amounts of time outdoors including moving around the site. A covered tent with chairs and water refill station are available throughout the day. There is a wheelchair-accessible portable restroom on the festival grounds. The festival itself begins at noon, so for about half of the day you may be nearby large crowds, with a lot of sensory stimuli including amplified music, smells, and stage lights.

About the program

[The Art of Mass Gatherings](#) is an initiative of Majestic Collaborations that uses festivals as classrooms to activate an arts-focused approach to resilience and emergency preparedness. Local event producers are invited to attend a series of talks and workshops where local luminaries and special guest experts will present on how all gatherings can be elevated by adopting the four lenses of safety, accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement in their planning. Site tours and training will highlight some of the successful measures in place at BAMS to increase broad community engagement, accommodations, safety, and reduce the festival's ecological footprint. Some of the confirmed speakers and workshop leads include:

- **Melissa Hector**, Director of Equitable and Strategic Initiatives, Boston Public Health Commission
- **Andrew Sharpe**, President, Authentic Caribbean Foundation
- **Brianna Millor**, Chief of Community Engagement, City of Boston
- **Nancy Smith**, Program Manager, CERT & Volunteers, Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management
- **Daniel Chonde**, MD, PhD, Executive Director, The People's heART, Massachusetts General Hospital
- **Colleen Flanagan**, Engagement and Outreach Specialist, Boston Disabilities Commission
- **Hilina Ajakaiye**, Executive Vice President, Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau
- **Wilber Brown**, TRS Solutions
- **Brooke Amendola**, Director of Planning, Preparedness & Coordination, Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management
- **Anthony Alamina**, Director of Emergency Management, Regional Catastrophic Grant Program (RCPGP)

Full program schedule and speakers to be announced shortly!

This event is made available at no cost to participants thanks to the support of the Performing Arts Readiness project (PAR). The event is one of several around the country this year that falls under the **Art of Mass Gatherings for Performing Arts** experiential education series, a collaboration between PAR and Majestic Collaborations.

This event in Boston would not have been possible without the support of the event partnering organizations, presenting speakers, and many other regional and local organizations.

Contact

Michelle Vigilance
313WON Productions
Local coordinator
support@mvservicing.com

Matthew Ché Kowal
Majestic Collaborations
Co-founder of the Art of Mass Gatherings
matthew@majesticcollaborations.com

See our [online press kit](#) for more information about the Art of Mass Gatherings, including photos which can be used in articles.

More about some of the partners

MAJESTIC COLLABORATIONS works directly with arts organizations and agencies to address environmental and humanitarian concerns with art, culture, design and planning through training, consulting, advising, and experiential learning. Their experiential learning program, [The Art of Mass Gatherings](#), and workforce development advocacy initiative [The Art of Creative Resilience](#) recognize that many of the skills and resources that artists and event workers possess align with the needs of communities when it comes to building local resilience and responding to crises more equitably. Learn more at [majesticcollaborations.com](#) and [theartofmassgatherings.com](#).

BOSTON OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT coordinates emergency management, emergency preparedness, and homeland security planning for the City of Boston. Boston OEM's mission is to enhance the City's capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from major emergencies. Learn more about the department and how to sign up for Emergency Alerts (AlertBoston) at [boston.gov/emergency](#).

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL is a state agency that advances the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector by celebrating traditions and talents, championing its collective needs, and equitably investing public resources. The Mass Cultural Council envisions a diverse creative and cultural sector that is valued as essential in Massachusetts. Learn more at [massculturalcouncil.org](#)

The mission of **THE EMERALD NECKLACE CONSERVANCY** is to restore and improve the Emerald Necklace for all. The Conservancy connects people and parks and conserves the Emerald Necklace through projects and programs that enrich the visitor experience and restore and renew the landscape, waterways and parkways. To steward the Emerald Necklace's 1,100 acres of parkland extending from Boston's Back Bay through Brookline and Jamaica Plain to Franklin Park in Dorchester, the Conservancy collaborates with its partners on advocacy, maintenance and restoration, education and access and promoting park stewardship through volunteer and youth programs. In its role as a steward of Frederick Law Olmsted's 100-year old park system, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy will be seen as a trusted collaborator working seamlessly with its public partners to restore, improve, maintain, and protect this iconic urban landscape. This work will be visible to all and recognized nationally for setting standards of excellence and creating best practices in preservation, advocacy, education, conservation, programming, safety, sustainability and park administration. Learn more at [emeraldnecklace.org/about-us](#).

PERFORMING ARTS READINESS helps performing arts organizations nationwide learn how to protect their assets, sustain operations, and be prepared for emergencies. Its work brings together knowledge of the performing arts field and expertise in emergency preparedness from both the performing arts and cultural heritage communities to conduct community outreach and engagement, sponsor grants, and develop and share informational resources to help support performing arts organizations in developing safety and preparedness plans. Learn more at [performingartsreadiness.org](#).