

## NYSKA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HEATHER HITCHENS WILL DEPART TO TAKE ON NEW LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR

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### NYSKA Executive Director Heather Hitchens will Depart to Take on New Leadership Opportunity in the Cultural Sector

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New York State Council on the Arts Chair Danny Simmons has accepted the resignation of Heather A. Hitchens, Executive Director of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSKA), effective May 23, 2011. Upon leaving State service, Executive Director Hitchens will serve as head of the American Theatre Wing, an arts service organization and founder of the Tony Awards®.

"Heather is a tireless and passionate advocate for New York's cultural organizations," Chairman Simmons said. "Understanding the significant economic challenges of the day, Heather guided efforts to mobilize the arts and cultural community to meet these challenges and to amplify the positive impact of our State's great cultural institutions on local communities and economies. Heather was also a leading voice in efforts to bring greater ethnic and geographic diversity to the Council. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to work together."

During Executive Director Hitchens' term, more than \$123 million was invested in New York State's cultural infrastructure in the form of grants to more than 2,000 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. Hitchens also lead the Council's efforts to better integrate arts and culture with economic and community development through the Cultural Blueprints initiative in 2008 and, in 2009, transformed the Council's Arts Education program, broadening its reach and opening the program to community-based organizations for the first time. Hitchens also oversaw a reorganization of the Council's staff in 2010

Executive Director Hitchens said, "I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to serve the people of New York. While these have often been challenging times for the Council, I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish. New York State is home to some of the most innovative arts and cultural institutions in the world and these organizations are making important contributions in every corner of the State. I have been fortunate to have worked with Council and staff that is dedicated to ensuring that these organizations continue to thrive. "

Hitchens was appointed Executive Director of the New York State Council on the Arts by Governor Spitzer and assumed her post at the Council on August 1, 2007. Hitchens had previously served as President of the composer service organization Meet The Composer for nearly a decade.

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[< back](#)

[previous listing](#) • [next listing](#)