

Marist Center for Lifetime Study (CLS)

Wednesdays 2:45 PM AL9

Inside the Bardavon: New York's Oldest Continually Operating Theater

April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 May 6, 13, 20

Bryan Zellmer, Executive Director of Bardavon 1869 Opera House

Inside the Bardavon - New York's Oldest Continually Operating Theater

Class Description

Join Bryan Zellmer, Executive Director of the Bardavon 1869 Opera House, for an engaging exploration of the theatre's history, operations, and role in the performing arts world. Over eight weeks, we'll trace the Bardavon's journey from its 19th century beginnings to its place in today's community, and take a behind the scenes look at how shows are discovered, booked, and produced. Through stories, photos, discussion, and an on-site field trip, you'll learn how a historic venue functions and thrives. Perfect for anyone who loves history, the arts, or simply learning how community theaters work.

Meeting Dates & Corresponding Topics

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – The Journey: Introductions & Background

Bryan Zellmer will share his professional arts journey and integrate his ties with the Hudson Valley's performing arts history as well as give a sneak peek at his vision for Bardavon's future.

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 – Collingwood to Bardavon

The story of the opera house and its many changes, as well as stopping at key moments in its history to see what was going on in community and/or world history; from its very start in 1869 through today.

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 – The People: Operations & Organization - What are the

roles of a non-profit venue, and take a deeper dive into the day to day activities of running a box office, working on the technical and production staff, and being a volunteer usher.

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 – **FIELD TRIP**: History Alive!

Meet at the Bardavon 1869 Opera House at 35 Market Street in Poughkeepsie!

Join an immersive, in-person theater tour and discussion, to experience some of the history and see the sites, the likes of which Mark Twain saw when he performed in Poughkeepsie's opera house. NOTE: the historic building has no elevators, so if stairs are difficult or impossible for you, we will have an alternative tour option that is fully

accessible, while the rest of the group tours the parts of the building that require the use of stairs.

Wednesday, April 29, 2026 – Booking Shows

The processes of booking shows at the Bardavon, touching on the many ways artists and groups are discovered and considered, negotiations and deal types, contracting, and executing the agreements and implementation of the promises made by both parties.

Wednesday, May 6, 2026 – Community Convenings

Booking professional shows directly is only one part of the business at the Bardavon; discuss other show and event types that fall under rentals, co-pros, and special community events, as well as how those all come together.

Wednesday, May 13, 2026 – Connecting Community with 3 Important Departments

Marketing, Community Engagement, and Educational Outreach

We'll talk about the work performed in three important departments of the Bardavon's general operations that help connect the venue with the community.

Wednesday, May 20, 2026 – The Big Picture

Bardavon's Place within the wider Performing Arts Industry

How this industry functions on relationships, the importance of various consortiums, conferences, and other professional convenings, where information and data is shared, booking opportunities are found, and lasting connections are made.

Information

Bryan Zellmer

bzellmer@bardavon.org

862-354-7414 (cell phone)

www.Bardavon.org