

# Inaugural Artist Development Summit Brings Entertainment Industry Leaders to Salt Lake City

*An artist development Summit was A way TO ANNOUNCE AND BRINGS HOLLYWOOD INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS TO SALT LAKE CITY FOR THREE-DAY ARTIST DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT.*

SALT LAKE CITY , UT, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Actors, filmmakers, writers, musicians and emerging creatives gained direct access to working entertainment professionals through an immersive three-day program focused on craft, career development and real-world industry knowledge. Following the success of the inaugural event, the creators are already developing their next [Artist Development Summit](#), planned for New York City in spring 2027 under a new name.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH — August 2026 — The inaugural Story Forge Artist Development Summit brought an extraordinary gathering of entertainment-industry professionals to Salt Lake City, Utah, August 20–22, 2026, for three days dedicated to educating, developing and connecting creative talent.

Built around the philosophy “Stories Start Here. Legacies Are Forged,” the summit was created from the founders’ belief that meaningful artist development has become increasingly absent from Western entertainment. Going beyond the traditional entertainment convention, Story Forge placed aspiring and working actors, writers, filmmakers and musicians directly alongside professionals who understand what it takes to build and sustain a career.

Attendees participated in panels, workshops, demonstrations and networking opportunities covering acting and audition technique, casting, filmmaking, producing, screenwriting, storytelling, artist development, on-set professionalism, career longevity, branding and the



Aurelian “Elora Birdwell” Jinhee Wilde,  
Tony Toscano

business of entertainment.

## An Exceptional Gathering of Entertainment Professionals

The summit welcomed an accomplished multidisciplinary group from film, television and music.

Paul Weber, CSA, veteran casting director, audition coach and former Executive Head of Television Casting and Feature Film Consultant for MGM Studios, provided attendees with insight into professional auditions, casting and what industry decision-makers seek in talent.

Actress Charlene Amoia, recognized for her recurring role as Wendy the Waitress on *How I Met Your Mother*, brought extensive film and television experience, including *Seven Pounds*, *American Reunion*, *Birds of Prey*, *Fear Street: Part One – 1994* and *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It*.

Award-winning actress, producer and artist Nina Bergman, known for projects including *Hell Hath No Fury*, *Cold Meat*, *Doom: Annihilation* and *Deathstalker*, shared perspectives spanning performance, producing, resilience and career longevity.

Emmy Award-winning screenwriter Nancy Schilbe, whose credits include the acclaimed HBO Max series *The Pitt*, brought the professional writer's perspective, sharing insight into character development, television writing and the collaborative journey from page to screen.

The gathering also featured filmmaker Dean Devlin and entertainment professionals Sarah French, Lisa Brenner, Devin Sidell, Rob Diamond and Brendon Wilde, alongside singer-songwriters Aurelian and Josh Mandreger.

Co-founder Tony Toscano, an Emmy-winning film critic and film historian with more than four decades in entertainment, brought his extensive knowledge of cinema and the industry to the experience.

Rather than presenting success as a single pathway, the summit encouraged its guests to discuss the very different journeys behind their careers — including challenges, setbacks, persistence, training and the professional relationships audiences rarely see.

## Artist Development Beyond Talent

A central mission of the summit was the belief that talent alone is not enough to create a sustainable career.

Programming addressed both craft and career readiness, helping artists understand professional sets, auditions, collaboration, networking, industry relationships, personal presentation and the business decisions surrounding a creative career.

Perhaps most importantly, attendees received something difficult to reproduce online: human connection. Artists exchanged ideas, formed relationships and learned directly from professionals actively working across entertainment.

## Building What Comes Next

The inaugural summit represented more than a three-day event. Its founders envision a continuing artist-development movement centered on education, mentorship, collaboration and opportunity.

Story Forge was created by Elora Birdwell, also known as recording artist Aurelian; Jinhee Wilde, founder of JW Law and Elite Global Management; and Emmy-winning film critic Tony Toscano. Their shared goal of connecting developing talent with experienced leaders across acting, casting, filmmaking, writing, producing and music became a reality in Salt Lake City.

While “The Story Forge” was created for this inaugural event, future summits will continue under a new name. Planning has already begun for the next Artist Development Summit in New York City in spring 2027.

The mission, however, remains unchanged: helping artists develop not only their craft, but the knowledge, confidence, relationships and professional understanding necessary to build sustainable careers.

Every established career began with someone willing to learn, create, take a risk and tell a story.

Stories Start Here. Legacies Are Forged.

Watch for the new summit name and New York City dates.

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