

Bio | Cheryl T. Schiele [*pronounced Shee-lee*]

Cheryl T. Schiele (she/her) is a program manager and musician who believes artists bear witness to, interrogate, expand, and nurture our humanity. Her career has been propelled by a deep interest in artistic endeavors that enhance community engagement, action, and reflection.

For more than 18 years, she has worked in the folk and traditional arts field on a national level, successfully implementing special initiatives to support culture bearers and community-based traditional artists. Currently, Cheryl is the Program Director, Arts & Cultures for the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies. From 2006-2024, she managed folk & traditional arts programs at the National Endowment for the Arts—an independent federal agency—overseeing staff and managing project grant funding opportunities, the National Heritage Fellowships honorific awards, the National Folklife Network, and the Folk Arts Partnership program. Respectively, these programs honored culture bearers and fostered living cultural traditions in communities across the U.S. (also referred to as folklife, folk arts, or intangible cultural heritage).

Previously, Cheryl was the Registration Manager for the Education Department at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, in Washington, DC, a premier performing arts presenter, national monument, and living memorial. From 1998-2002, she was the Program Coordinator for Bargemusic Ltd., a renovated coffee barge turned concert venue. Moored under the Brooklyn Bridge, Bargemusic produced more than 200 concerts year-round. She was also a supervisor for the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts box office in Vienna, Virginia, a performing arts center situated on a 117-acre national park.

A violist with a degree in music and concentration in music industry, Cheryl served as the founding board member of the Network for Diversity in Concert Percussion, board vice president of Dorian Baroque Orchestra in New York City, and as the NEA union leader of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 3403. In my spare time, she enjoys reading books on African American history and culture and learning new skills as a novice seamstress.