



NEWS FROM TCA: APRIL 2023

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Mariam Botana de Armas is the 2023 Texas Poetry Out Loud state champion!
Photo: Amanda Klaus

2023 Texas Poetry Out Loud Winner Named

The [Poetry Out Loud](#) recitation contest is a national project of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. This exciting program helps students master public speaking skills, build self confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. High school students memorize poems and perform them in competition. The students are evaluated on qualities such as articulation, evidence of understanding, accuracy and overall performance. In the 2023 Texas state competition, 17 high school students from across Texas competed for a chance to advance to the state finals. The virtual semi finals, held in late January, were judged by poets/performers KB Brookins, Sasha Pimentel, Robin Reagler, and Joaquín Zihuatanejo.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
AND POETRY FOUNDATION PRESENT



The 2023 Texas Poetry Out Loud finals were held in person at the Texas Spirit Theater and graciously hosted by the Bullock Texas State History Museum on Saturday, March 11. The finals brought together the top nine competitors from across the state to determine the state champion and runner up. The event was hosted by internationally renowned Texas poet Naomi Shihab Nye. The judges for the competition, Christopher Carmona, Julie Poole, Jo Reyes Boitel, and Ebony Stewart, are Texas poets and performers.



After two rounds, the field was narrowed to five finalists: Ana Sophia Avendano, a senior at Cornerstone Christian Schools in San Antonio; Mariam Botana de Armas, from the

Northside School of Innovation, Technology, and Entrepreneurship in San Antonio; Aishwaryaa Udeshi, a junior at Dulles High School in Sugar Land; Sophia Arthur, who attends Founders Classical Academy in Frisco, and Ava Shipp, a junior from the Hockaday School in Dallas. Ultimately, Ms. Botana de Armas, an 11th grade student, won the 2023 Poetry Out Loud state final. As state champion, she will receive \$200 and will represent Texas at the national level. Mariam will compete in Washington, DC, May 9-10, for a pool of \$50,000 in scholarships for students and cash awards for schools. Additionally, her school will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry books and materials. The Texas runner up was Ava Shipp. She will receive \$100, while her school will receive \$200 for the purchase of poetry books and materials. We congratulate all our 2023 participants, their teachers, and their families.

Texas Legislative Session Update

The 88th Session of the Texas Legislature is rolling along. Since the Texas Legislature meets biennially, it will make decisions on two years' worth of State budgeting, including TCA's budget for fiscal year 2024 (September 1, 2023 August 31, 2024) and fiscal year 2025 (September 1, 2024 August 31, 2025). As part of the budget process, TCA filed a Strategic Plan and Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR). The format of the LAR allows TCA to request the amount of its current two year budget as the Base Appropriations Request, and to ask for additional Exceptional Items as additions to the budget for the coming two years.



TCA's Legislative Appropriations Request is available in full [here](#).

Base Appropriations Request: \$23,260,676 over the biennium
Exceptional Items: \$8,300,000 over the biennium (detailed below)

In addition to the Base Appropriations Request, TCA is requesting increased funds (Exceptional Items) of \$3 million over the biennium for arts organization grants and \$5 million over the biennium for cultural districts.

TCA's Legislative Appropriations Request will be considered as part of **Article I in House Bill 1**. TCA has presented its budget requests to both the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee. The Legislative Session will end

on May 29, 2023.

The budgets proposed for TCA by each side of the Legislature have some differences. The House Appropriations Committee's budget includes the full exceptional items TCA requested, while the Senate Finance Committee's budget in **Senate Bill 1** proposes smaller increases of \$1.5M for arts organization grants, and another \$1.5M for cultural district grants.

The differences between the two bills will be addressed and reconciled by a conference committee made up of five members each of the House and Senate. You can use [this page](#) to follow the progress of each bill.

Photo: Texas Legislature Online

Support Texas Arts with the New *State of the Arts* License Plate



In recent months, TCA has been working with the Texas license plate vendor MyPlates to launch a new design for the TCA. TCA's new black and silver *State of the Arts* minimalist design license plate is shipping and is available to order at <https://www.myplates.com/go/arts>.

This plate design can go on a passenger car, motorcycle, trailer, or private bus (attention, Texas bands!). TCA will receive a portion of the sales of the plate. Note that this plate is part of MyPlates' "Lone Star Series," but only the *State of the Arts* plate supports TCA. There is a price break for those ordering their plate for multiple years. Make a long term commitment to the arts!

Upcoming TCA Application Deadline

TCA has an upcoming application deadline. As always, the TCA staff is happy to discuss your goals and eligibility to determine which programs are right for you. You may also request that a TCA staff member review your application and provide feedback. Ideally, these requests would be made at least two weeks before the application deadline.

Grant Program: Arts Respond Performance Support

This program provides professional artist fees to Texas nonprofits, schools, colleges, and units of government for hiring an artist from the [Texas Touring Roster](#) to do a performance. These applications are funded based on a percentage of contracted fees. If you are hiring them for a planned in person event, we encourage you and the artist to discuss a contingency plan in case that event cannot be held as anticipated, and to outline that plan in the performance contract. Please let us know if you have questions about the plan you are considering.

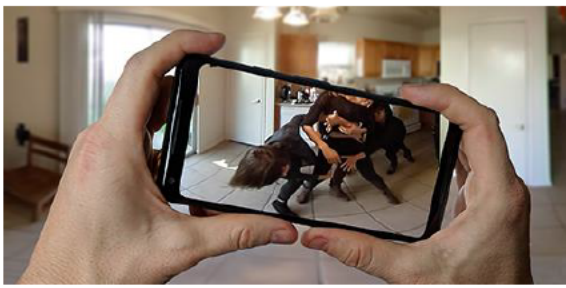
Activity dates must occur: Between June 15, 2023 and August 31, 2023

Application deadline: Midnight on May 1, 2023

Application form: [Online](#)

Resources: [Grant guidelines](#), [contact TCA staff](#)

Texas Touring Roster Artist Rural Tours in March and April



In our continuing efforts to provide more quality performances and arts opportunities in underserved rural areas of the state, TCA has selected eight Texas Touring Roster artists and groups to provide free performances in rural counties between March 1 and August 31 (TCA pays each artist a flat fee for the performances directly.). Each artist or

group provides six performances in an assigned area, and the performances are hosted by local nonprofits, units of government, or schools. In the summer, these tours often serve youth summer reading programs in libraries. Hosts are reminded that any Texas nonprofit or unit of government (including a school or library) is eligible to apply for a Performance Support grant for up to half of a Texas Touring Roster artist's fee.

Contemporary dance ensemble [ARCOS](#) presented multimedia performances with interactive installations and hands on workshops for community members in Crane, Brewster, and Presidio counties. They performed on March 14 at 3 PM and 8 PM at Crane County Public library, March 16 at 4 PM and 8 PM at Alpine Public Library, and March 17 and 18 at 8 PM and 2 PM at Marfa Open.

Poet [Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton](#) did a storytelling performance for children at Aransas County Public Library in Rockport on March 15. Later that day, she also conducted an art and nature driven workshop for teens and an author Q&A at Calhoun County Library.



In April, Deborah will give two readings of her newest memoir. She will be doing these performances at Goliad Library in Goliad on April 8 at 10 AM and at the Sanford Community Center in Palacios on April 18 at 5 PM. Ms. Mouton will offer a workshop at the Sanford Community Center at 4 PM that day.



[Guadalupe Dance Company](#) will present *Viva La Cultura*, a lecture dance demonstration, as part of their rural tour.

This month, they will give four performances at Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde on April 3 at 12 PM, 12:45 PM, 1:30 PM, and 2:15 PM.

[Texas Shakespeare Festival](#)'s Roadshow will bring six performances of their high caliber professional theater act to rural communities in Central Texas. On April 25 at 6 PM, they will perform at Texas Botanical Gardens' Native Interpretive Center at Legacy Plaza in Goldthwaite. The next day, they will perform Shakespeare's Greatest Hits in Santa Anna at Santa Anna High School at 7 PM. Lastly, they



will provide four performances for schoolchildren at Brownwood Lyric Theatre on April 27 and April 28.

We'll share more performances in future newsletters. Special thanks to the fantastic artists conducting rural tours on TCA's behalf this year.

ARCOS photo: E iot Gray Fisher; Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton photo: Pau a Lu; Guada upe Dance Company photo: Edward Benavides; Texas Shakespeare Festiva s Roadshow photo: John Dodd

Apply to Be a TCA Grant Evaluator

Each year, TCA invites roughly 200 Texans to serve as peer reviewers of the grant applications we receive. We are grateful to these members of our arts field who donate their time and knowledge to our panel review process and assess the quality of grant applications. The peer review process is central to the Commission's efforts to maintain an accountable, accessible awards system for the State of Texas. TCA is currently assembling panels of evaluators to review Cultural District Project grant and Cultural District Designation applications.

If you would like insight into the grant evaluation process, we invite you to nominate yourself to serve on a panel. TCA is not able to pay for this work, but it will allow you to gain experience as a grant evaluator, see how other organizations present their programs and challenges, and ensure that TCA grant decisions can be made—we really can't do this without you. Nominations are accepted year round and can be made [here](#).

Panels can be held online or in person in Austin. TCA reimburses for travel and hotel costs for in person meetings. For online panels, TCA assigns reviewers no more than 25 grant applications to help keep the workload reasonable. **Evaluators can also be grant applicants**—TCA excludes evaluators from reviewing and scoring an application that they submitted or have any other conflict of interest with.

Grantee Spotlight: Showing Up for Students Increases School Attendance

Every fall, TCA staff spend many, many hours reviewing report forms that grantees submit as they close out their grants. These reports share arts organizations' trials and tribulations, challenges and solutions. Many of these stories will resonate with others across our field, so we're sharing some of them through grantee spotlights.



For **Hope Stone, Inc.** (Hope Stone), a Houston based arts organization which conducts community engagement programs and dance performances, 2021 marked the first time Hope Stone held an indoor dance performance since before the pandemic. It was also the first time they returned to classrooms in full force. The year served to put into focus how, despite changes in the world drastically affecting Hope Stone's work and those they serve, they could use what they learned to maximize their impact.

The return to indoor performances was surrounded by concerns about performer and

audience safety, and event turnout or cancellations. Determined to resume their standard programming, the organization took safety measures and gave a performance that integrated dance, theater, and video at a local middle school. This production resulted in a newfound appreciation for how video could be used to serve more people, and for what it takes to successfully translate the experience of dance onto film. Hope Stone used that understanding to expand their performance and educational programming with additional videos that could be screened virtually or combined with a live performance.

Alongside performances, Hope Stone identified a real need to bring the Hope Project, which provides children with mindful arts education in multiple disciplines, back into schools they were unable to serve during the pandemic. A majority of the students they served with their TCA grant were economically disadvantaged. As well, the pandemic had a great impact on these students' school attendance, and correspondingly on their academic performance and social development.

By increasing the number of classes offered overall, and integrating some video components alongside in person classes, Hope Stone was able to increase the number of students they served beyond what they initially anticipated. For the students enrolled in their classes, **out-of-school suspension fell by more than 70%, and attendance for Hope Stone's arts classes increased to 98%.**

What began with concern for safely serving students and community members resulted in growth and personal successes. Hope Stone's TCA grant report relayed the experience of a third grader in a creative mindfulness class at Clemente Martinez Elementary School. Informed that he had forgotten to return two overdue books and asked about how he would remember to pack them, the student thought for a moment until he broke out into a wide smile and said with a finger tapping at his temple, "I'll use my hippocampus!"

TCA is proud to be able to support Hope Stone and so many wonderful organizations across the state who make the arts accessible to more of our fellow Texans.

Photo: Hope Stone, Inc.

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